

Step 1: We admitted we were powerless over our addiction, that our lives had become unmanageable.

Principle: Honesty (To truly heal and recover one's well-being, one must concede to their innermost self that they are truly powerless.)

Buddhism

In the First Noble Truth, the Buddha said life is full of suffering or rather "unsatisfactoriness" (dukkha). Dukkha arises out of ignorance, which leads to thoughts, which lead to consciousness, which generate feelings, that generate desires or cravings, which create grasping or attachment, which create the condition of dukkha. Step One is the process of recognizing this Truth. Buddha said we should respond to this Truth by seeing it clearly, not shying away from the pain, but understanding the cause(s) of our suffering. Buddha recognized that even in our moments of fulfillment we are grasping toward more.

Christianity

Step One is the admission that we are dependent on God's will. It requires that we unequivocally place our faith in Him. When we are misguided or self-absorbed we discover we have placed our faith in other people, money, status, power or notoriety. This step is a recognition that this misplaced faith has not worked, and in fact, has caused our lives to become unmanageable.

Cosmology

We admit we are powerless over an addicted society, and that our lives and all of life has become degraded. When the consumption of anything is killing us and we cannot stop, we are addicted. We are one with the Earth and the Earth is becoming toxic. This poisoning is the result of overproduction and over consumption. According to cultural historian, Thomas Berry, the main reason we find ourselves in such ecological chaos is because we are in between stories. "We are out of touch with our true and larger Self." We have not integrated what we are learning about the Cosmos from science into our existing creation story.

Hinduism

Human predicament is marked by ignorance (avidya), desire and aversion. How do we who are Brahman fail to know what we are? People are ignorant of their true identity as Brahman. We fail to understand our true nature. We are driven by desire for that which promises to fulfill the needs of our body and mind. Without liberating knowledge human behavior is much like animal behavior - being driven by instinctual desires and aversions.

Islam

The Qur'an frequently depicts unbelievers as having hearts which are diseased. This belief is in alignment with the medical model of addiction - for those who meet the criteria of dependence, it is a disease. It also aligns with the fundamental belief that those who do not have spirituality in their life, experience dis-ease for which they continually seek external means of fulfillment. In Islam, Allah provides the solution which again parallels the 3rd Step - submission to the will of Allah.

Judaism

This step follows in the footsteps of our ancestors. When the Jews were poised at the edges of the Red Sea, with the Egyptian armies in pursuit they were panicked. The Israelites were afraid to cross. Moses cajoled them, but to no avail. Fearful that they had come so far only to perish in the waters, our ancestors were ready to return to Egypt and again become enslaved. This may also be our fear. With this step we stand at the threshold of the Red Sea every day - struggling, fighting the urge to return to the slavery of our dependency.

Native American Spirituality

Because of my dependence on alcohol, I have been unable to care for myself and my family.

Taoism

The focus of the 12th Verse of the Tao Te Ching reminds us that allowing the desires of our senses to drive our actions results in excesses and a loss of connection with our inner truth. Because everything in our world is transitory, it is easy to chase appearances and illusions and be distracted from what has meaning and purpose. Dr. Dyer in *Change your Thoughts, Change your Life*, translates this simply to mean, "We cannot know the creator if we're focused exclusively on what is created." The Tao provides a clear description of the power of addiction, "the chase and the hunt craze people's minds." It goes on to affirm that it is a waste of energy which in the end impedes our emotional and spiritual development. If we live according to the Tao we learn to live in the world, but not to be solely of the world because we no longer allow it to be the master of our choices. Our senses become instruments through which we experience the world, broadening and deepening our appreciation and gratitude for its diversity and abundance.

Step 2: Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.

Principle: Hope (Hope is the first step in discovering the solution which is identifying with a power that can help dispel the obsession created by the addiction. The gift in this step is discovering and believing that change is possible.)

Buddhism

In the Second Noble Truth the Buddha tells us the cause of our suffering is our ceaseless desire for pleasure (tanha) and ignorance (avijja). The abandonment of desire is a core value of Buddhist practice. For suffering to end, we must learn how to cease our craving, and acquire the wisdom we do not have. Suffering is caused by our desire to have things be different than they are; it is a grasping for self-satisfaction and fulfillment from external sources.

Christianity

Step two is focused on developing a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. It is a relationship which transcends rational understanding and belief. It is an experiential realization that Christ cares for and about us and is ready and available at any time to be in relationship with us. This relationship encompasses love, forgiveness, comfort, guidance and direction.

Cosmology

We came to acknowledge the existence of an Originating Mystery accomplishing the evolution of the Universe. This Mystery will be revealed to us in our natural relationships to self, to others, to other species, to Earth and to the Universe.

Hinduism

Atman is the eternal light of of consciousness that illumines the mind. It is not the mind; this Atman is Brahman. The goal of spiritual discipline is knowledge (jnana) of the identity between one's true Self (the higher Self) and Brahman which leads to liberation from (samsara) the cycle of birth and death perpetuated by karma. The true Self is the light of consciousness that shines deep within the mind. The true Self is changeless. The journey home is impossible without external assistance because the conditions of captivity are so disorienting that the deluded are unable to find their way home under their own power

Islam

Muslims wholeheartedly believe that Allah will show them the path to liberation and salvation. "God guides to the right path whomever He wants." (2:213). However, it requires that each person make their spiritual path and work their lifetime work. The results are not up to God, but a combination of God's mercy and man's right actions. "Those who seek the protection of God will certainly be guided to the right path." (3:101) The path is described by Allah as an "uphill path" and outlines the required works: freeing people in bondage, helping those in need, and feeding the poor.

Judaism

Jews have always known that belief is essential, but that doesn't mean it's easy. Our tradition tells us the one power God withholds, even from Godself, the power to make us believe. Difficulty in faith is not failure. Look at the story of the golden calf where we turned our backs on God after God brought us out of Egypt. How far is it from creating and idolizing the golden drug or bottle to the original golden calf? Perhaps there is no difference. The sages pointed out that there are many kinds and forms of golden calves in our lives.

Native American Spirituality

There is hope no matter how much misery and despair we feel. God can help, but we must do our part. The Creator has gifted us with free will, and the power of choice, which must be in alignment with our goals.

Taoism

"Knowing ignorance is strength. Ignoring knowledge is sickness." This verse of the Tao touches the heart of the paradox of addiction and recovery in the words "only when we are sick of our sickness shall we cease to be sick." It is only when we become fully aware that we are sick in mind, body and spirit that we can cease to be sick, because only when we are equipped with this knowledge are we ready to consider changing the fundamental cause. Knowledge provides us strength, ignorance of the truth perpetuates our dis-ease. When we experience dis-ease in mind, body or spirit it is because some aspect of our life is out of balance. The next step is to identify where we are living in excess and what is being ignored as a consequence.

Step 3: Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him.

Principle: Faith (Faith requires making a decision that will solve the problem.)

Buddhism

In the Third Noble Truth the Buddha tells us desire ends when we let go of craving and attachment; the pain will dissolve. When we gain a deep understanding that all things in life are impermanent, unsatisfying and without eternal substance, we are ready to start letting go of our attachment to the conditions and our desire for change. We cannot experience Nirvana or bliss until we let go of our clinging nature.

Christianity

Step Three is an action step. Many analogies used to explain the 12 Steps describe Step One as the diagnosis, Step Two as the prescription, and Step Three as following the various steps prescribed by the physician in order to heal. This step requires a submission of one's will to follow directions and guidance from a source outside oneself. When we apply this analogy to our larger

life, it means we surrender our need to control every last detail and allow ourselves to be guided by Divine will. In Christianity, this surrender is often called repentance. Repentance comes from the Latin word *penser* or *ponder*, meaning "to rethink." It requires us to rethink who is actually in charge of our lives, our destiny, our eternity.

Cosmology

In an evolving universe everything is constantly in a state of flux; nothing is static, nothing remains the same. Science demonstrates this at a subatomic level everything is vibrational energy, however, our eyes and our minds trick us into believing it is constant because matter appears dense and static. This is precisely why we need faith. We need to trust in the unseen, the Mystery.

Hinduism

Liberation (*moksa*) comes from living a life of right action by following the guidance of the scriptures. The Veda is considered to be the only source of valid knowledge. Liberation means liberation from one's body (*sariratva*). The individual soul must rely on the Lord who is the ultimate cause of all action. It requires one to surrender their conventional identity and to identify themselves wholly with Brahman. Liberation is another word for Brahman. Knowledge of Brahman is the removal of ignorance. Liberating knowledge is the insight that one truly is Brahman. Scripture teaches that Brahman is the light of consciousness that illumines the mind and therefore is the true Self; that knowledge is the cure for the disease of suffering caused by ignorance.

Islam

Faith in Islam is called *Iman*. It requires complete submission to the will of God (Allah) which includes belief, profession, and full commitment to Allah's will. *Iman* has two aspects: recognizing and affirming that there is only one Creator of the universe and worshipping only this Creator. According to Islamic thought, this comes naturally because faith is an instinct of the human soul. The other aspect is willingness and a commitment to Allah and His prescriptions for living.

Judaism

Some people think faith in God comes easily. For Jews, belief in God is a struggle. We spend our lives trying to figure out the range and shape of that belief, what it means, and how it compels us to act. We start by making a decision to believe. You will have doubts, we all do. Throughout the Jewish calendar year we are given opportunities to start again, to make *teshuvah*, a turning toward God. Before Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, we get ready to shed our past and begin our journey toward personal repair. Scripture captures this time when fearfulness can be transformed: "When God began to create...the world was chaotic, without order. And so, God drew near to the chaos and brought light to the world in order to illumine the darkness."

Native American Spirituality

This Step focuses on seeking help and guidance from an Elder, a Medicine person, a sponsor, a mentor or a spiritual friend. Allow your eyes, ears and heart to guide you to the right person who can understand and support you. Learn more...

Taoism

In the Taoist way, when we come to understand that when we force an outcome we are going against the flow of life, and in doing so, we often encounter resistance, disappointment and often suffering. It often feels like we are pushing to no avail. When we surrender, we are letting go of the need to control everybody and everything around us. The need for control comes from fear; the fear of our own inability to handle what we are not ready or prepared for. There is a natural rhythm in the flow of life, and when we find it, we are able to effortlessly keep in step. Only then do we live our lives by letting go of stress, worries and fears, trusting in a power greater than ourselves.

Step 4: Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.

Principle: Courage (Courage is the ability to confront fear, pain, danger, uncertainty, or intimidation. Moral courage is the ability to act with integrity in the face of shame, scandal, or discouragement.)

Buddhism

The Precepts, the Hindrances and the Eightfold Path are all available for taking inventory. Classic Buddhist inventory uses the training precepts. These are the fundamental moral principles the Buddha taught to avoid creating negative karma. This step requires making a decision to follow the Buddhist path of liberation by taking refuge in the practice of wakefulness, truth and fellowship.

Christianity

It takes courage to look at the truth about ourselves - our character defects and our strengths. The process of sanctification (being healed or becoming holy) requires a willingness to know the truth about ourselves. It requires a fearless and thorough self-examination. We need to face the hard questions: where do we fall short, what is it we are to become, how must we change? What are the attitudes and behaviors which need to be changed? Our ability to rationalize our behavior creates a veil of self-deception. This step pierces this veil which is often painful but necessary. This step is the fulfillment of the adage, 'the truth will set you free.'

Cosmology

This step asks us to examine our part in how we have harmed the Earth itself and the species with whom we share the planet. We must ask ourselves when we have demanded more satisfaction than was our fair and equitable share of the supply (food, water, sex, oil, energy, money etc.) Only when we take this step personally, can we identify our own addictive behaviors and their consequences

Hinduism

Ayida which is spiritual ignorance of our true nature is the root cause of our suffering. When we are in bondage to ayida, we experience aversion (dvesha), attachment (raga), self-centeredness (asmita) and fear of death (abhinivesha) because we are clinging to life and mistakenly believe our physical bodies are our sole identities. Meditation practice allows our consciousness to expand until we move from the limitations of the self to a wider experience of reality.

Islam

Righteousness, as taught in the Qur'an, is a commitment to acting in accordance with the will of Allah. Specifically, it means living one's life from a deep sense of justice, equality and fairness. It encompasses a generosity of spirit and deeds, reaching out to those in need, maintaining one's inner strength to stand firm against the powers of evil, and carefully fulfilling one's duty each day. It is obedience to the Law of Islam.

Judaism

Taking inventory or confession is called a cheshbon banefesh, which is literally an accounting of the soul. Self-examination is an important part of the Jewish tradition. In Avot de Rabbi Natan, it is written: "The eye is shown only what it is capable of seeing and the ear hears only what it is capable of listening to."

Native American Spirituality

Self-examination has always been part of Native culture because the cultural definition of success is centered on building character. Before we can build character, we must know our shortcomings, weaknesses and character defects. Self-examination takes a warrior's courage. To have courage means to have heart. This step is about finding your heart.

Taoism

This verse of the Tao is asking us to discover who we really are; and how we affect others. What is the quality of our relationships with family, friends, community and Earth? How are our actions impacting others? Are our actions congruent with our values and beliefs or are we acting out of alignment with our inner core belief system? Do we spend more time apprising others than we do evaluating and scrutinizing ourselves?

Step 5: Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.

Principle: Integrity (the quality of having a sense of honesty and truthfulness regarding one's motivations and actions.)

Buddhism

This Step relates to Right Speech which is based on saying only what is true and what is useful. Words are inherently powerful; they have the potential to create and to heal; as well as to harm and destroy.

Christianity

Confession is a critical step in our healing process. It represents the releasing or turning over of that which we no longer want to be; or to carry in our hearts and souls. It is the open, verbal expression of the insights gained from our self-examination to the God of our understanding and one other person. The most difficult aspect of this step is the requirement to share with another human being. Our pride often tells us this is unnecessary, but in fact it is critical. It humbles us and from this experience we grow stronger in our own integrity. Once we have released our fears, harms and resentments we experience a sense of lightness and acceptance. The forgiveness we experience is the gift of grace

Cosmology

Step Five is a "confessional" step designed for us to empty ourselves - to empty our psychic trash. In Zen, this process is called sunyata. In spiritual concepts, it is creating a void through emptying. We know from physics that a void is never static, always available to be filled. Once we remove the psychic toxins we have been holding, we are ready for the Originating Mystery to recreate us.

Hinduism

Dharma is fulfilling one's life's purpose. It means doing what you are called to do; doing it ethically, purposefully and to the best of your ability. In the Bhagavad Gita, Lord Krishna urged Arjuna to pick up his bow and go to war. He was born into a family of kings and warriors and his brother's kingdom was taken over by a tyrant. This was his dharma.

Islam

Ablution or cleansing is a ritual (rak'at) preceding prayer which Muslims perform in order to purify and ready themselves for prayer. These preparations known as wudu' are obligatory if water is available. The first step is an acknowledgement of one's obedience to the

practice and to Allah. In addition to the washing ritual, one's clothes must be clean, and one must be modestly attired. Allah only hears prayers if one is physically clean.

Judaism

The Baal Shem Tov, has taught us that, through the power of prayer, even the least among us can communicate with God. Every outpouring of the heart, when spoken in earnest and with devotion is a true prayer. According to the rabbis, one of the effects of transgressions is a hardening of the heart. The heart becomes like a rock, solid and impermeable, feeling nothing. When you begin to admit your wrongs to God, openings develop, like small cracks in a rock. Once our heart begins to open, these cracks begin to widen. Finally, our hearts break open, and the head begins to know what before only the heart felt.

Native American Spirituality

This step is about disclosing our secrets. When we reveal our secrets to another human being and to the Creator, the heaviness is lifted and we begin to see with our hearts, just as the eagle sees love in everything. This step deepens our relationship with the Great Spirit.

Taoism

The Tao asks us to live beyond our judgment of others. We are given a formula for learning to live harmoniously with each other. It requires us to replace criticism, judgment and prejudice with acceptance, kindness, and appreciation. This conversion does not happen instantly; it requires practice and discipline. We can begin by replacing our critical and judgmental thoughts with just noticing others without evaluating or assessing them. The next step is to identify something in the other that is similar to yourself. Look for the common ground - focus on the similarities not the differences. The way of the Tao is to see ourselves in others and to experience the oneness of all creation.

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

Principle: Willingness (Inclined or favorably disposed; ready to act; voluntary; self-determined; intentional.)

Buddhism

This Step relates to Right Intention which is a threefold process: the intention of renunciation or detachment; the intention of good will; and the intention of harmlessness. These three are opposed to three parallel kinds of wrong intention: intention led by desire, by ill will and by harmfulness. Just prior to the Buddha's enlightenment he reflected that his thoughts could be separated into these two distinct groups (right & wrong). When those of the second kind arose he saw that they brought distress to himself or to others - or to both. They obstructed wisdom and led away from freedom. But whenever those of the first kind arose they were clearly beneficial, conducive to the growth of wisdom and an aid to the attainment of Nirvana.

Christianity

This step reminds us that we always have a choice - we were given free will. We can take the softer, easier way and do what we have always done with the same results, or we can make the hard decision to do what is right. This is the human struggle. This step requires us to live and grow in the integrity and values of our faith. It requires conviction. The previous steps have, however, prepared us through the practices of repentance, self-examination and confession. We have also come to believe that we are not powerless, knowing that God is an indwelling presence which provides us with a well of strength and hope.

Cosmology

We become entirely willing to have all habits of illusion removed from our thoughts, attitudes and behaviors. We become willing to allow the Originating Mystery to transform us from within from being self-centered to other-centered.

Hinduism

There are several ways of making amends for misdeeds from one's past: meditation which releases karmic energy from the body; contemplating the divine qualities of a favorite deity; and chanting the sounds resonant with divinity to purify one's consciousness and neutralize it from negative karmas. This practice is considered sacrificial because it requires taking our time to focus on God and divine qualities; self-reflection; and surrender to the Divine Will with gratitude and humility.

Learn more...

Islam

Fasting is performed by Muslims in obedience to Allah. It helps Muslims learn the practices of discipline and self-restraint. It also clears the mind and the body and readies it for open and receptive communication with Allah through prayer and meditation.

Judaism

Our character defects define us and protect us at the same time. Thus we fear their loss would leave us fragmented, empty and vulnerable. When the early descendants of Adam corrupted the world, God saw fit to wash it clean. We rely on God to send for spiritual waters to cleanse us, to wash away our transgressions. Each time we see a rainbow we are reminded of God's promise always to help cleanse us. God spanned the rainbow across the heavens to serve as an eternal reminder of His connection with us. We recite

continually in our hearts: Baruch ata Adonai, zocher ha-brit. (Praised are You, Adonai upon whom we rely to remember this covenant.)

Native American Spirituality

This step consolidates the process of self-discovery through which we identified our character defects and weaknesses. Now we are entirely ready to release them

Taoism

The heart of this step reminds us that all we need to do to change is take the first step. It is often the hardest step, but once it is taken, those that follow become easier. It also reminds us that we can't go back and do-over what is already done. All we ever have is now, this moment. This practice is also at the heart of the 12 Steps which emphasizes living one day at a time, and concentrating only on doing the next right thing. One step, one moment, one day at a time is the way of the Tao.

Step 7: Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.

Principle: Humility (Freedom from pride and arrogance; lowliness of mind; a modest estimate of one's own self-worth; an act of submission.)

Buddhism

This Step relates to Right View. Right view develops in stages. We commonly begin our quest for truth through a direct insight into the first Truth - suffering. Our habitual views are challenged and appear lacking. Our search begins. We come to appreciate that some of our views are wrong and we modify our actions (karma) accordingly. More wholesome actions bring stability of mind which inclines us toward reflection and meditation which in turn deepens our understanding. The process is a gradual one. It requires understanding the Five Aggregates and learning self-management of them: body, feelings, perceptions, mental formations and consciousness.

Christianity

At first, change is difficult; this is true for everyone. The first step in the change process is willingness to change. This step is based on humility, because at the core of this practice, is the realization that we can't do it alone. We need the support of others who understand, we need a path of practices like the 12 Steps or the 10 Commandments, and we need to know that the strength we require comes from the indwelling Presence of God. Our personal transformation will only happen if we learn to ask for help: from others, and from God through the words and intentions of our prayers. Through prayer we ask for our needs, for the Highest and best good for all concerned, and we express gratitude for these and all the gifts we have received from His bounty and grace

Cosmology

This step calls for us to be humble. Humility comes from the word humus or soil. Humility helps us recognize that we come from the soil. We are earthness. We plant, harvest and eat the products of the soil. When we die, we compost into soil again.

Hinduism

People need to hear revealed truth and be taught the meaning of the truth by a guru(s) so they can gain understanding and reach enlightenment. A compassionate wise teacher must remove the blindfolds of delusion that keep a person imprisoned in the forest of the body.

Islam

The body of Islamic law as a whole is known as Shari'a, which means path. According to Islam this is a divinely appointed path explicitly laid out for humanity to follow in order to reach salvation. It has two primary sources, the Qur'an and the Sunna. The Sunna is significant to the spirituality of Islam because it teaches Muslims how Muhammad acted during his life. The Sunna addresses ways of life dealing with friends, family, and government.

Judaism

Humility is one of Judaism's precepts. How can we not be humbled by God's awesome presence? Jews cover their heads to constantly remind themselves there is a greater Power. We bow the head and bend the knee in prayer to remind ourselves that we are not in control, God is. To be humble is to speak from the strength of one's limitations.

Native American Spirituality

At this point in the warrior's journey we have the knowledge, desire and allies to change. The self-knowledge comes from the inventories and lists made while facing South. Our allies are the sobriety Elders and the Red Road brothers and sisters we've been sitting with in sobriety and healing circles. And, now we are also walking each day with our Creator. Humility is an attitude that will help us start fresh in everything we do. It helps us face life with a beginner's or learner's mind. One of the tools to help us is writing and repeating affirmations.

Taoism

The verses of the Tao Te Ching help us view our lives through the filter of balance which is a fundamental principle of the Tao. It helps us understand when enough is sufficient and that within the natural order there is enough. Excess upsets the balance. Our own excesses upset the balance in our lives. A prideful ego sets us up for a fall which is the natural consequence of this excessive behavior when it pushes out the appreciation and acclamation of others and their efforts and contributions. If we live our lives humbly, we know how much is enough, when to stop and when to let go. In living our lives mindfully, we can find joy in any moment.

Step 8: Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.

Principle: Love (Personal attachment; that which commands admiration; sympathetic understanding; ardent affection; the earnest effort to promote the welfare of others.)

Buddhism

An awakened person maintains a heart filled with loving kindness toward all beings. One does not view anyone as an "enemy." All beings are seen through the eyes of compassion and are treated with kindness. The Dalai Lama is the ultimate modern day example of one who not only embodies love and compassion, but demonstrates how to extend it to those who hate and deem to destroy the Tibetan people and their religious beliefs. He says repeatedly, "My religion is love."

Christianity

Making amends or making restitution is an action step. Many think an apology might suffice. Amends, much like Step 5 (confession), is a humbling step through which we must own and be accountable for the effects or consequences of our behaviors on others and make every effort to right the wrong. If we have stolen monies or property, then we must replace what we have taken plus add one-fifth to it (much like we pay interest on debt). The result of having performed this step is freedom from guilt and shame which would otherwise remain alive and buried in our emotional psyche.

Cosmology

We trust that the Originating Mystery inherent in all matter causes life to self-organize, self-evolve and self-regulate. We humans need to allow this process to evolve.

Hinduism

Seeing Divinity in everything means having a vision of equality. There are no judgments, no rankings, no categorizing, no labeling, no duality. The sage sees everyone as he sees Self. It becomes easier to "Love your neighbor as your Self." This practice requires that we actually see ourselves in others - in order to find the common ground of our beingness. It also requires that we know and love ourselves, without that, we cannot know or love another. A God-realized person sees nothing but God everywhere because there is only one Universal truth grounded in love.

Islam

Muslims practice showing gratitude for Creation and all that it encompasses. They show their humility for what they have received. Their prayers reflect their gratitude for all they have been given from daily guidance to the creation of the Universe. Believers follow the example of Prophet Solomon who prayed with deep gratitude, saying "Lord, inspire me to thank you for Your favors to me and my parents and to act righteously so as to please You." (27:19)

Judaism

Lists imply order. Some people think there is too much order in Judaism. But Jews believe that if we follow a specific way of doing things, an order that has worked for so many for so long, we have a better chance of reaching our goals. We are taught that part of our task is to restore order and goodness to the world. We have a powerful compulsion to mend the world's imperfections. This step prepares us to begin making the world a better place by correcting the injustice that has come from what we have or haven't done through our own actions.

Native American Spirituality

This step helps us start to mend the wreckage of our relationships. We acknowledge that we have hurt people. We prepare the ground to actually make amends in the next step. We understand that we are connected to all things. When we accept this truth we become willing to look at our part in the creation of the harm. Each person who wronged us or we wronged is carefully considered, respected and honored. To honor one is to honor all, and to dishonor one is to dishonor all.

Taoism

When there is hurt, "someone must risk returning injury with kindness, or hostility will never turn to goodwill." There must be an offering of kindness, love and authentic forgiveness. The cosmos continuously demonstrates that within chaos we find tranquility and vice-versa. This is characterized in the symbol of the yin and yang. Within the darkness we find a speck of light. As we come to live in the way of the Tao, we learn to let go of anger and resentment in order to create space for love and kindness to flow. Source is always giving, always creating, and new life is always emerging. This is the way of the Universe.

Step 9: Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.

Principle: Justice (the quality of dealing justly between people; integrity; perfect social harmony; the practice of virtue toward others; equitableness; fairness; impartiality.)

Buddhism

Remorse is one of the Five Hindrances which are obstacles to meditation, happiness and our ability to lead satisfying lives. During meditation we come to understand their power and begin to develop skills to overcome them so they no longer have power over our thoughts and actions.

Christianity

Making amends or making restitution is an action step. Many think an apology might suffice. Amends, much like Step 5 (confession), is a humbling step through which we must own and be accountable for the effects or consequences of our behaviors on others and make every effort to right the wrong. If we have stolen monies or property, then we must replace what we have taken plus add one-fifth to it (much like we pay interest on debt). The result of having performed this step is freedom from guilt and shame which would otherwise remain alive and buried in our emotional psyche

Cosmology

We move into action. We become an active part of the healing of the planet. Many will discover the giving of ourselves was what we longed for all our lives. We become filled with the marvelous power of hope. We join others in the great work of renewing the Earth and we begin to experience community again.

Hinduism

All human beings have five debts we need to repay during our lifetimes. We must express our gratitude to the gods for their blessings by honoring them through ritual. We must pay the debt we owe our parents and teachers by supporting them, and passing on their knowledge to our children. We treat guests visiting our homes as if they are deities. We treat all human beings with the respect which is their due. We offer help to those who are in need.

Islam

Almsgiving (zakat) is also a form of purification which cleanses the Muslim of greed and selfishness while requiring an equitable sharing of goods with the entire community. The purpose is to create unity and an understanding of the community as one interdependent whole. Zakat is critical to one's salvation. If a Muslim recites the creed, prays and does good deeds but neglects zakat, there will be no salvation. There is a reciprocal relationship between the practice of zakat and experiencing God's mercy.

Judaism

“There is a time to act” says Ecclesiastes. For Jews the deed is more important than the thought. Who we are is equal to what we do. Making amends heals us and the world; we begin to actively restore shalom; unity and wholeness to the world.

Native American Spirituality

As we walk on the path of forgiveness and justice we stay focused on the things we have done wrong. We are on the path to becoming right with the Creator and with others.

Taoism

This verse asks us to give to others without keeping an account or expecting something in return. This principle equates giving with receiving. One is equally as important and virtuous as the other. Both are equal aspects of the practice of circulation. Both require an element of trust - trust that ultimately justice and fairness prevail. Trust in the law of karma which affirms that for every action there is a corresponding reaction. When we learn to trust in the Tao we come to understand that everything exists in harmony. Nature is harmony. In order for us to live harmoniously we need to give whenever possible and to receive whatever is ours.

Step 10: Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.

Principle: Perseverance (to stand firm; steadfastness; endurance; continued pursuit, continuance.)

Buddhism

The Five Precepts are the five categories of action from which everyone should abstain (much like the 10 Commandments). The difference is in Buddhism there is no final authority who judges our actions and doles out rewards or punishment. In Buddhism, everyone has the right to voluntarily choose to live by these Precepts out of compassion for themselves and for all sentient beings on Earth. When we live by these Precepts we ensure all creatures absolute safety and we know we cannot create negative karma.

Christianity

Even though we strive to be Christ like, at times we fail. Our conversion is a lifelong process. We are responsible for the maintenance of our spiritual state of being which requires daily examination, repentance, confession, forgiveness and restitution. If we err, we need to address it immediately (within 24 hours is a good rule of thumb). It is a simple, easy practice which allows us to keep our side of

the street clean in all relationships. This practice of righting our wrongs daily, results in true and lasting change from who we were to whom we want to become.

Cosmology

For Earth and its species to continue to evolve on its trajectory of growth and bountifulness, it is imperative that as a species we come to understand our proper place in the universal scheme. The time is now for us to take responsibility for our choices and actions because we are interconnected with all beings. We need to recognize our strengths, gifts and assets as well as our limitations and challenges. We need to make a concerted and committed effort daily to walk this Earth in integrity.

Hinduism

Samsara is the endless round of rebirth from which Hindus seek to be free. The spiritual self lives on and will be held accountable for all the choices made. When we pass on to the next world for judgment, Yama tallies the soul's record and determines whether we receive reward or punishment. The sinless are led to the paradise of Brahma and the less virtuous will return to embody life at a higher level than the last. Death and judgment occur as often as each soul needs until it achieves freedom from rebirth. In the 4th Teaching of the Gita, Krishna tells Arjuna in very clear terms to follow his ways and be purified through the fire of knowledge. Knowledge will replace ignorance and free him from the cycle of samsara.

Islam

Islam requires true repentance in order to receive Divine mercy, forgiveness and eternal salvation.

Judaism

In Judaism there is a tradition to arise early to do a mitzvah. As a result your entire day will be more tranquil. Jews are expected to take inventory and make amends. The Jewish tradition teaches that we are not required to finish the work, but neither are we free to desist from it. The inventory and the action to correct any wrongdoing become one and the same, simultaneously.

Native American Spirituality

This step is about moment-to-moment inner alertness and offering instant amends when necessary. The only way to change old habits is to create new ones. When we practice being a positive warrior, the negative warrior eventually fades into the background. If we are consistent and diligent we make a new life.

Taoism

"Be poised and centered in the midst of all activities." This verse from the Tao Te Ching advises us how to maintain serenity in the midst of any circumstance. The source of this serenity comes from within and is therefore always available. The essence of the truth in this verse is that circumstances don't determine our emotions and actions unless we allow them, the power of choice resides within us. The challenge is always to maintain a state of stillness and calm even in the midst of chaos. This paradoxical balance is symbolized by the opposing energies of the yin and yang. This practice will develop the skills of self-mastery within us. The Tao states that when we allow ourselves to be "blown to and fro" by the changing circumstances in our lives, we are no longer centered by our root and we become restless and vulnerable.

Step 11: 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.

Principle: Spiritual awareness developed from the practices of meditation and prayer (Meditation is a disciplined practice in which the mind is focused on an object or the awareness of itself. It requires focusing attention on a single point of reference. The practice often results in the experience of a higher state of consciousness. It has been practiced for over 5,000 years and is present in most faith traditions.)

Buddhism

The primary function of Buddhist meditation is to transform the mind. Mindfulness is being aware of the conditions of the mind (of your thoughts). In Buddhism we learn there is an "observer" which can step aside and observe both our thoughts and our actions. There is a full range of conditions which can be experienced by the mind from serenity through fear and anxiety to the bliss of Nirvana. For any one to become fully awakened, they must learn the art and practice of mindfulness both during meditation and during normal day-to-day activities. Mindfulness keeps us in touch with ourselves and with the present moment. It provides the opportunity to make choices: changing our thinking, letting go of negative thoughts, and selecting actions from a range of options. With practice, mindfulness becomes a way of living.

Christianity

For most Christians, our goal is to become more Christ-like. In order to do so, we require wisdom and direction. We are encouraged to develop a personal relationship with Christ so we are available to learn and be directed. This relationship grows and matures through our ability to talk, to listen and to follow Divine guidance. It has often been said that prayer is our side of the conversation, and meditation is the time to listen. Often the responses come through inspiration, through spiritual messages in books and church services, through opportunities that present themselves synchronistically. Part of our responsibility is to stay open, awake and aware.

Cosmology

Spirituality provides a way for us to remember who we are and to reconnect with our Source. It teaches us how to build relationship with the Originating Mystery.

Hinduism

Meditation is necessary for the mystical insight that alone could be the cause of liberation. Meditation firmly secures knowledge already gained. It is necessary for liberation. It prepares the person for the emergence of inner knowledge. The person who has realized the Self has transcended desire; lacking nothing and being free from compulsions. Because karma can interfere with the constant remembrance of Brahman, meditation is necessary.

Islam

Prayer is called 5 times daily and devout Muslims stop and pray at these times. The prayer leader (muezzin) chants the Call to Prayer in Arabic. Muslims pray to express their faithfulness to God and to remind themselves of their devotion to Him and to His way of life. Prayer is a commitment of faith, it removes evil, and prepares one for final rewards in Heaven.

Judaism

Judaism teaches we can come into contact with God through any activity with the right intention. God is present in all things and in all people so we can come into conscious contact with God through any of our interactions with the world. Through these interactions we become aware of God's presence in our lives.

Native American Spirituality

We have always been a people of prayer. Something inside us becomes alert when an Elder prays. This step is about re-awakening our gift of prayer and using it for recovery. Many of us view a path as a narrow trail, but a spiritual path is unlimited. Prayer and meditation widen the path and remove obstacles in our way. When we seek something bigger than our ego-self we find self-esteem. The deep root of our wellness is our relationship with the Great Mystery. Prayer and meditation keep our spiritual awareness of the unseen world of Spirit very close.

Taoism

The Tao Te Ching describe Itself as invisible, inaudible, and intangible. Yet through our intuition we can see, hear and feel it as one presence. It is not something we can grasp and hold, but rather something that we can learn to be; and when we have some mastery in the practice we will experience "ease" in our life (tranquility, serenity, harmony, and freedom from suffering).

Step 12: Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to carry the message to others, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

Principle: Service (an act which is performed without any expectation of result or award for the person performing it.)

Buddhism

During his life the Buddha taught and ordained disciples who became known as the Sangha. The primary purpose of the Sangha was (and is) to continue to teach the precepts. The Sangha is considered to be one of the Three Refuges or jewels of Buddhism. It is respected as a community of Noble Beings who have realized at least one of the four stages on the Buddhist path to spirituality. When someone takes refuge in the Sangha, they are actually relying on one of these Noble Beings for guidance, much like a new member in AA relies on a Sponsor to guide them through the Steps and support them as they practice their new way of living.

Christianity

Christ prepared the Way. He created the ideal blueprint of how to live a Christ-like life. He told us that He and the Father are One and that we too can have this same relationship manifested in our lives when we reach out and love our neighbors as ourselves. In fact, we are intended to carry forth His ministry. He told us with great clarity, "You are the light of the world." When, we live these 12 steps as they are laid out, our actions will speak louder than our words. They guide us in the demonstration of a Christ-like life. It is only when we are in service to others that we are able to give to others the many gifts we have received.

Cosmology

Communion or interrelationship is the underlying principle of the Universe. Everything in the Universe is in communion with everything else. It is all interdependent and interrelated in an unbroken bond of connectivity. There is no separation - diversity and subjectivity yes, but no separateness.

Hinduism

The mind's capacity (samarthyam) to carry out its function is contingent on illumination provided by the infinite and unconditioned light of consciousness. Brahman is the light of consciousness. Karma yoga is the performance of an action with detachment from the results for the sake of worshipping the Lord (isvaradhanarthe). It is action performed in a spirit of selfless sacrifice to God.

Islam

The sense of solidarity shared by Muslims is highly valued. They view themselves as a community (umma) who share their belief in Allah. They value their spiritual kinship and their own individual freedom. The pilgrimage to Mecca (Hajj), has the ultimate benefit of the pilgrim receiving forgiveness for one's sins. The actual events heighten one's God consciousness and create a sense of spiritual fulfillment. Muhammad promised that those who perform the Hajj will return from it as a 'newly born baby' implying a freedom from sin. It also encompasses the three main practices necessary to achieve eternal salvation: hard work, prayer and forgiveness from sin from Allah.

Judaism

As the result of these steps your Judaism has been renewed. Continue to work them again and again. Just as each Passover we are back in Egypt again as slaves, so each time we rework a step, we confront the addiction anew. It is important to concentrate on your own practice before carrying the message to others. From Pirke Avot 4:5 - "Regarding the person who learns in order to teach, Heaven will allow that person to continue to learn and to teach. But concerning the one who learns in order to practice, Heaven allows that person to learn and to teach, observe and practice. "

Native American Spirituality

As individuals we can help our brothers and sisters who are still suffering from drug and alcohol abuse one-on-one. We can talk to them about what our lives were like, about the Journey we took to heal ourselves, about what we are like now, and our vision for the future. We can share the good that happened to us when we began to walk the Red Road by blending the Medicine Wheel Teachings of our traditions with the 12 Steps of A.A. We have had spiritual experiences and we found that the vision we created through our mind maps are now coming true in the 12th Step.

Taoism

The secret of the Tao is in serving. The reason that both heaven and earth last forever is because they do not live for themselves, but for others. It is a simple message and formula for happiness. This verse affirms the law of circulation - by giving without expectation, everything we need will come to us. "Serve the needs of others, and all your own needs will be fulfilled." The Tao describes the perpetual and eternal free-flowing power from the Source which sustains and endures. Our work is to understand that we are one with this power which flows through and as us when we are willing and available.