

Step Six & Seven Workshop
with Corinna & Paulie D.

Opening

We are going to take a journey inward and upward by understanding the workings (which is an action) of Steps Six and seven. We will then be less likely in recovery to stay stuck in behaviors and patterns by taking this journey it will also help us get an understanding of the principles behind the Sixth and Seventh Step thereby taking the actions necessary to continue in the program. The Sixth Step is not dramatic there are no enthusiastic witnesses to rush up and shake one's hand. It's a rather solitary affair and hence seems simple. But have I taken any action? Step Six means facing ourselves and that is usually more difficult than being honest with another person.

There are many stages in surrender and practicing. It is called progress. We will be discussing many of the stages in connection with the Sixth Step we will be discussing many of the things that hinder our ability to surrender and many of the defects of character that we wish to remove. There is no magic in recovery! We get what we work for! Could it be that it is time to take(another, real) look at Steps Six and Seven?

Question one-is there a character defect that you are aware that you will not let go of? Why?

Question two-do you have a character defect that you blame someone else for? Example... People, situations, or institutions.

Question three- do realize your defect? Do you deny your defect?

Steps Six and seven are preparing us to change-are you willing to change?-Change what? Patterns, thoughts, speech and behaviors?

Question four- are you willing (total surrender) to look at your character defect each morning and make that your first piece of spiritual business?(Remember these are all objectives)

Question five- do you feel like you are at a plateau with your recovery or does it feel stale? (Fear, still playing God?)

Question Six-is pride with thoughts of superiority blocking the way to serenity, or habit of judging others, perhaps (deep resentment) ENVY or self-pity. Those will keep us in turmoil (untreated.)

Statement

Pride is very threatening to us the idea we've held about ourselves what we must choose whom we would become, our defects many times are our best friends, just like the drink. If(I choose to be) "entirely ready" and my character defects lessen or disappear, who will I be?

Question seven-are you willing to start giving up and looking at those parts of you that are defective-self-defeating? Are you willing to work on the Sixth and Seventh Step outside the meeting instead of just talking about them at the meetings. Are you seeking opportunities to look at and let go of your defects? There is always something new and better to take their place fear is what keeps us from change it can cause us alarm, but if we do the work and move forward, it gradually disappears in the light(TRUTH) it disappears in proportion to our understanding of who our Higher Power is and how the God of our understanding works. Practicing is how we develop trust in a higher power.

Question eight -why do we resist becoming spiritually ready?

What keeps us from taking action?

Paul and I will read from page 15

Question nine- are you still lying to yourself when you say you are willing to change? Who are you really lying to? (That question ties into thine own self be true)

Statement

the fact that I will daily question my willingness to change will increase my ability to be increasingly willing. Again remembering these are objectives we are not constantly focusing on my character defects we are learning to deal with them as we go along(LIVE) this is extremely important what we are looking for is (GROWTH) and to let go of those things that limit us. We help others by setting the example rather than telling them the example. The first act is awareness. The second is excepting, the third is surrender (action).

Paul and I will read from page 21

Find the ritual: that may help you to become ready-the power of a ritual is incredible-walk on the beach, talk with God, pray, writing things out maybe in a Journal-or in a poem- let these actions add depth and meaning to any commitment we decide to make for example, willingness to be or stay willing for me prayer has been the most effective... Communicate with the power, communicating with God helps gain clarity for your own actions. Prayer can only be realized through practice. You will not get benefits in trying to figure this out, prayer is not something to be intellectualized and analyzed. Prayer can be a form of (Thanksgiving) as well as (grateful) quiet time-meditation-we must learn to turn down our minds, open our hearts (spirit) and give ourselves to our God in quiet time this will come with practice. This is preparing us for the disciplines in our 11th Step.

Paul and I will read page 28 and 29 preparing for cleaning:

Are you gaining maturity?

Do you swear a lot?

Are you sarcastic?

Do you gossip?

Do you make prejudiced remarks?

These are offerings to take into prayer. How then does a person who has taken a Third Step and is preparing a practicing for Steps Six and seven talk? We try to give up these behaviors until God removes them. If we think of any other area in our life that we'd like to be able to have a clear understanding of, we can design a cleaning, (exercise) to gain a new perspective there is no better time than now! To look at all the trouble areas in our life we get ready to make over all those areas so that we become willing to (examine) them. (Prayerful contemplation.)

Examine:

what kind of wife or husband am I and how am I going to improve?

What am I doing to take care of my body? My mind? My spirit? Keeping in mind that these are not separate!

One of the ways we can thoroughly examine ourselves is looking at the seven deadly sins.(Let us consider them carefully.)

Pride: leads the pack. My sponsor had me look up each one in a Webster dictionary and write an example of that particular sin which caused me pain(separation from God.) The definition of pride: excessive belief in one's own abilities.

Taking a look at pride means gaining a new perspective and looking again at who we are, not exclusively at what we have or do. The willingness to work the Sixth Step is necessary. We can begin by understanding having healthy pride in our accomplishments in life is fine as long as it is coupled with humility and gratitude. The thoughts that must go with us constantly is "How can I best serve (THEE)"you? Your will be done, not mine.

Note: pride is not to be feared. Although pride is listed at the top of the list of seven deadly sins, the sin is having arrogance or false pride. Healthy pride is a necessary part of self-esteem and character growth. The pride that "goes before a fall" is an unhealthy state, a symptom of character defects of egoism, grandiosity, and arrogance. No harm will come to spiritual growth from the pride experienced when we freely admit to ourselves that any progress of ours was not made by us alone.

Envy: the desire for others (traits, status, abilities or situations.)

Envy is a form of fear. Just like pride, envy has a lot to do with results-other peoples. We admired things, jobs, friends, relationships, status, and just about everything else that someone else has. Envy is very much caught up in desire. We are taught desire rather than deserve. Just because we want the universe to operate on a deserve principle-you will reap what you sow-yet we have to work toward it or if we just want it badly enough, something will happen so we can get it. No wonder we become frustrated and depressed. Just affirm it enough in your life, and it will manifest. (WRONG!)

The same rules operate for everyone. We can get almost anything we need in life. We can't realistically get everything we want. We must learn to be selective and to work for what we want. Sow the seed, and the plants will grow. The more seeds we plant, the more will grow... Given proper nurturing, care, sunlight, water, and soil. But we only have time to plant so many seeds. And God plays a part in the weather and soil. Just as in the Sixth and Seventh Step, gods part is as important as our part. We must do the work. God provides the environment and opportunity-and the power, direction, willingness, and the teachers.

Questions: question one- how do you sow seed?

One way is by asking God to help.

Another way is by turning away from old behaviors, ways of thinking-and turning toward God.

Question two- Do you wallow in your character defects worthlessness, or rudeness, sadness, and self-pity?

Question three- Are you envious of those who have what you want?

Question four- Does envy bring hatred, jealousy, anger, fear, disrespect, and distrust?

Question five - Do you wish failure and disaster upon people who become successful?

As we go through this process we will discover that doing is more important than having, and that experience is more important than possessing. The willingness to work on our character defects of envy produces that positive practice of having more compassion, empathy, and love.

Gluttony: (consuming more than required)

What areas of your life are you gluttonous-alcohol, drugs, eating, gambling, sex?

This Step is to help us align our will with his on all matters. How honestly we work the Steps is in direct proportion to our desire for positive Change... No holding back please be willing to look at it all. It is important to put all our habits into context of becoming entirely ready. If we overlook one little addiction or one little bad habit or one little defect, are we just a little addictive? How can we claim abstinence if we still hold to other addictive habits or character defects? It is important that we realize the Sixth and Seventh Step are not about alcohol or drugs or overeating or gambling or sexing. They're about putting our lives in alignment. How honestly we work the Steps is in direct proportion to our desire for positive change. No holding back. Please be willing to take a look at it all.

Sloth: (avoidance of physical or spiritual work.) The slogan easy does it doesn't mean we put things off. It means to do it, but to do it in our Higher Powers good time. Slow growth, slowly making progress with our defects of character, doesn't mean postponement.

Question one-How lazy are we in our relationships?

Question two-What kind of load do we carry around the house?

Question three-How about our spiritual practices? Are we carrying a load there?

Do we put in the time and effort to grow and expand, do we just pay lip service, if that?

Question four-What about other areas of our life? Are we continuing to grow mentally, emotionally, physically?

Question five-Do we practice disciplines and put out the effort to make our time count?

Sloth is the thief of time. The character defect of putting off actions until things get better is one of the most destructive detours we can make. Delaying never make problems go away; they only make success hard to attain.. If we shy away from bringing out our

problems to others, we are sure to cause stress and misunderstanding. Quite often, postponing facing up to reality results from fear that others will laugh at us. This is self-pity in action. Solutions come from direct and specific action.

Covetousness (desire for material wealth or gain while ignoring the realm of the spirit.) We have a distorted view of coveting in society. Much like envy, coveting (or avarice, or desire, or greed) is cultivated by advertising and media. We have to possess what others have. We must own and keep a grasp and hold tight all that we can. Examine what is behind it-usually fear. Don't TV commercials make us fear we are "less than" if we don't have the advertised product? The other sense of this word is coveting another person's partner. To inappropriately desire another or a thing is to covet we covet all the time. It is important to examine this in our lives. we are asking more questions than we are answering here, but this is an important function of becoming (entirely ready.) We must have a fairly accurate idea of how we view life and how we operate if we are to be in a position to let go of our defects and help in transforming and changing.. By accepting God's to help, we learn to think clearly, honestly examine our lives, play fairly, and give generously. All values change in recovery as we become less selfish and more useful. The value screen through which we see life changes. The values we show in the work of recovery look different from the ones we once held. Every day brings a new opportunity to work on our character defects because our values no longer change with every passing fancy. Our life now means something and counts for some things that are good.

Lust: (an excessive craving for the pleasures of the body.) Sex, and many issues surrounding sex, may be the most misunderstood and confusing area in recovery. Most of us never learned or were never modeled intimacy, so we confused sex with love, and lust with desire. For many of us, power is an issue in sex and lust, as is self-esteem. All this stuff gets wrapped up and mixed together and called sex or love or making love or intimacy. We usually don't have a clue what it is or what we are doing. Although many of us may have come from less than ideal family situations, sponsors remind us that we, not our families, are working the Steps, as we are right now. It makes sense that if we never learn to handle our feelings, we have to find a way to get by-drugs, sex, alcohol, or something. If we came from a family that denied; kept secrets; shamed; repressed and suppressed; physically, emotionally, or sexually abused us; what took part in any number of other ways of creating distortion in emotional, physical, and sexual responses, odds are our sex life is goofy and has been for a long time. Many of us confused sex with being intimate. Many of us think that being accepted sexually is the same as being loved, only to be disappointed again and again many of us use sex to act out our aggressions and hate of the opposite sex, in many different acts and obsessions. Men, in particular, seem to be drawn toward pornography and can have very active fantasy lives with very little contact with reality. Lust, and all the areas associated with love and sex, is an area we need to closely examine in the light of our spiritual values.

Question one-What do you really think of other people?

Question two -Are they objects to be used and discarded, to be fondled and played with?

Question three-Are they people, with feelings and hearts and depth, to be cherished and nurtured? Or are they just there for our pleasure?

Question four-How do we treat the people we love? Warmly and openly and with respect? Or badly as we wish, since, after all, we love them and they love us and they have to put up with us?

We ask God to mold our ideals and help us to live up to them. We remember always that our sex powers were God-given and therefore good, neither to be used lightly or selfishly, not to be despised or loathed. What comes from our Higher Power is to be honored and treated with respect, our sexuality has unlimited potential for good. We have so often turned this power in on ourselves and been destroyed by it or allow it to destroy others. The Sixth and Seventh Steps let us change our feelings about sex so that these new feelings can encourage wholesome relationships. When we walk with our Higher Power, our self-will doesn't run riot over our sex lives. Our spiritual awakening washes over all our relationships, even our most tender and personal. Being spiritual does not mean celibate or chaste. It may include these elements for different reasons and practices, but our body is as holy as our spirit and can celebrate the gift of love just as fully in harmony with all aspects of the spirit and love.

Question one- Do we dislike the opposite sex?

Question two- Do we fear or hate our own sex?

Question Three-how do we identify ourselves as sexual beings?

Question Four- Once we are in a relationship with someone, does our behavior change?

Question Five -Do we quit trying, showing our feelings, and giving fully?

Question Six-Do we honor and respect the other person and the relationship?

Once again the more we know about our ways of dealing with the world and the people in it, the better we will be able to become "entirely ready."

Anger: anger is a difficult emotion for a lot of us to deal with because of how we were taught to deal with anger as children. Since it was not possible to show our anger toward adults, many of us have learned to deny, repress, substitute, and suppress anger. Many of us have carried this into our present situations. We never saw ourselves as angry people." We were intense," and occasionally we get mad, but we certainly didn't see ourselves as angry. One of the many programs slogan says, "anger is but one letter away from danger" many of us nursed long standing resentments. Every time we thought about them, we got angry. What makes anger so dangerous is that it Burns without consuming. It feeds on itself until it overwhelms all other emotions. Anger is poison when anger takes over, it acts with uncontrollable rage. We say things, feel things, and do things way out of proportion. Anger is emotional drunkenness. (pg. 66, BB)...If we were to live we had to be free of anger. the grouch and the brainstorm are not for us. they may be the dubious luxury of normal men, but for the alcoholic these things are poison.

Because we are in recovery doesn't mean we don't get angry. What the Sixth and Seventh Steps give us a process of working through anger. We learned that what usually fuels anger is fear and guilt. We can dissolve anger. The remedy for fear is faith, for faith means

courage. We are ready to replace our anger with faith, the fear and guilt that cause anger is worked through, and the anger is removed. Courage is what makes us do the right thing even when nobody else is doing it. One word often heard in group discussion is "willingness". Yet the willingness to do something cannot exist without the specific action required to do it, and it takes courage to build our character. It is courage that turns possibilities into realities and assures us that progress in improving our character is possible. Experience teaches us that courage keeps our character defect under control. Many of the people we come into contact with in our lives who don't live by any program or belief think a 12 Step Way of life is trite (boring and repetitive, not important) and full of silly slogans and ideas. We can't be concerned with opinions about our way of life, even if others think it's trite, because this way of living life has become our secret to life. We overcome our fears about setting and working towards goals. It helps us to remember courage is fear that has said its prayers. Anger is a common defect in our attitudes and personalities. Like all other character defects, anger grows more harmful the longer it is contained. Unless we are exposed freely for others to see, fear can consume all of our good intentions. We "must get the monkey off our backs" before it reaches our throats. How can we possibly make peace and form worthwhile relationships unless we bring anger into the open by working Steps Six and Seven? Letting go of hidden anger and returning to a stable state of mind is one of the first actions in finding a much more comfortable and acceptable peace with life. One of the biggest risks to a person in recovery is self-righteous anger. Self-righteous anger. We become very dangerous to ourselves and others when we are "right". Being right used to mean a free check to treat a person who is "wrong" anyway we choose. Especially if we loved that person, it meant we could really cause havoc in the name of being "right". We just assumed that there was only one way. We were taught that by our parents, our places of worship, and our schools. As we move into our birthright as spiritual beings, we discover that "right" is a cage, not freedom. Being right is a perspective, not a license for angry behavior. Each of us has a unique perspective, thank God, and therefore a unique way of being "right". We must learn to temper our anger based on self-righteousness and learn to open our minds and hearts to different points of view. It doesn't mean we won't get angry. It just means we won't hurt others so often with our "rightness." In looking at anger as a character defect, it is important to realize that anger is a legitimate emotion. To deny all anger in the name of spiritual growth is as unhealthy as being angry all the time in the name of being right. We get angry. We need to learn how to express the anger in a healthy, non-demanding manner. It is the inappropriate expression of anger and the out of proportion expression of anger that is a defect and causes us and others harm. It was at a meeting that an old-timer said, "I am punished by my defects of character, not because I have them". Newcomers can be puzzled by that, for a long time. How can we be punished by our defects? Then it dawns on. God doesn't need to keep a watch on us and note our defects; our defects keep us from becoming all that we can become and limit our ability to grow. Buddha said anger is like picking up a burning coal with the intention of throwing it at another person. We are the ones who get burned in the process. So it took me four years of somewhat miserable dryness to get to the Seventh Step prayer. But then I was in for some surprise seven of them. Slowly, very slowly, at a Caterpillar pace, I realized that God is in the transformation business. Before I was even fully aware of it, a change was taking place in my behavior. Step Seven has changed pride into self-esteem. Caring and sharing have replaced selfishness. Surprise! Love has conquered lust. Anger has given way to tolerance. Surprise! Acceptance has displaced gluttony. Surprise! The joy of living has replaced sloth surprise! Envy is being replaced by inspiration.

We take a look at the part anger plays in our life and how appropriate our expression of anger is.

Question one-Are we upset and judgmental a lot?

Question two-Are people afraid of us?

Question three- Do we punish people with our rightness?

We look at anger and its consequences and then move toward being entirely ready to let it go. It is time now to put this discussion into balance and prepare to move on to the Seventh Step. We have asked a lot of hard questions. We examine some pretty difficult areas of living. We've decided to look for excess in our lives. We are now ready to take action. What, exactly, does that mean? Are we ready to change our ways of living? It is not a "maybe" proposition. It is "fish or cut bait". Let's fill that big self-centered hole in our being with spiritual usefulness. Perhaps many of us have approached this Step and the one to follow in a less active manner. Odds are we may still be battling some pretty major defects in our life, too. This Step requires commitment and specific action. There is no better time to get to it than right now. As we are taught in the 12 Steps, the chief activator of our defects has been self-centered fear. Mainly fear that we would lose something we already possess or that we would fail to get something we demanded. Living on this basis of unsatisfied demand, we obviously were in a state of continual disturbance and frustration. Therefore, we are taught there will be no peace unless we are able to reduce these demands. The Sixth and Seventh Steps let us examine our fears. We learn to take an inventory of each fear until we understand what causes it. Then we will be able to find a way to work through it. Had we reduced our fears? How do we move into graceful living and growth toward spiritual expression? The answers lie in our ability to humble and trust through the Seventh Step.

Step Seven

Humbly asked him to remove our shortcomings.

The key ingredient in living the Seventh Step is humility. There is not another subject in the program that causes more confusion than humility. It seems that every old-timer has his or her favorite definition. We all seem to get humility and humiliation confused, and many of us have a stereotypical ideal of humility - a spiritual pauper wearing sackcloth and ashes. Today we remember that humility is not being Meek. It is being our true selves. Humility for us means staying our right size-and remembering we are as humble as we are grateful. Humility is an attitude. As such, it must be practiced to be maintained and it must become a discipline to be developed, just like every other attitude. In developing humility, we are faced once again with an "active surrender." In asking God to remove our shortcomings, we must move and act in a manner that reflects our willingness and surrender. To do this requires,

- spiritual values

- service
- perspective beyond our addictions to alcohol, drugs, food, sex, and so on, to the addictive nature of our lives
- asking through prayer and being willing to receive through humility
- trust/asking for help
- overcoming fear
- understanding entrusting the process
- dealing with stress
- responsibility/action
- solution – focused thinking

we will discuss the above aspects of the Seventh Step and find a method for making this Step the foundation for the rest of your life. The first aspect the Seventh Step we will look at is spiritual values. Part of this discussion must be a clearer focus on humility. What exactly is humility? The dictionary defines humility as the state or quality of being humble of mind or spirit absence of pride or self-assertion or acts of self-abasement.(It is voluntary self-punishment or humiliation in order to atone for some real or imagined wrongdoing.)

Humble is defined as having or showing a consciousness of one's defects or shortcomings; not proud; not self-assertive; modest. Obviously, the second definition of humble is almost a word for word restatement of the purpose of the Sixth Step, humility will result. That seems to make sense, doesn't it? Still, it seems as if something is missing here. Humility is our acceptance of ourselves. Many of us believe the understanding of ourselves is in direct relation to our understanding and contact with our Higher Power. The image we see and the identity we have is one of humility before that power. Humility is our acceptance of ourselves based on our continual surrender. An aspect of humility that is often talked about in meetings is that of being teachable. If we are humble, we are open to new ideas and new ways of seeing things. Open-mindedness is very a important part of humility. We don't know it all. There is still more we can learn. And maybe even more important, some we need to unlearn. Yet, how many of us in the program are open to new ideas and thoughts? Especially after having been around a while, how many do we see continue to say and do the exact same thing year after year? It seems that many of us resist a clear idea of humility so we don't have to conform to it. What is it about Step Seven that causes so much confusion and apathy(an absence of emotion or enthusiasm?) How come we can be in the program for years and still not have a good idea what this Step means? Are we so blinded by pride that we can't see the beauty of humility and the benefits of this Step? Who needs humility anyway? The word "humble" is awfully hard for me to swallow. Besides that, there is something else that made Step Seven an obstacle for me. It calls for yet one more contact with God – and one that is open and willing for change. This is not just about having attitude or being ready. This is about being serious about change and doing something about it. No wonder we avoid dealing with this Step. In the process of working the first through the Sixth Step, we gain an ability to move through our fears and look toward God. We learn to talk honestly and openly in meetings and to share our limits and our fears with another human in an inventory. With the Seventh, however, the situation is different. It is suggesting that since I've done the groundwork, now is the time to "humbly" ask to change those things that stand in the way.(Give God his rightful spot.)

Question one – Are you afraid of approaching God this way?

Question two – Do you know why?

Question three – Do you need to stop in the middle of the Seventh Step and do a mini inventory?

Question four – Have you relapsed into an old form of spiritual pride?

Question five – Are you angry with your inability (powerlessness) to work out your shortcomings on your own?

Statement

We have to relearn that if we stick to our way of thinking and doing, we are doomed to repeatedly hook into our shortcomings (defects.) We have to get real!

Many of us have had a religious upbringing but abandoned it during their active addiction, we have felt that it was hard to even investigate a spiritual life again I, too, was brought up in a very religious environment and have had to set it aside to reconnect with a new reality. I had no openness of mind, no emotional or spiritual perspective for growth, no awareness that it could be any different than my old belief system. Thank God that by working through the Steps an opening up to any amount of humility I was capable of, things began to change. Humility became a goal and a quality, rather than obstacle and an obnoxious trait. I've come to know the Seventh Step as an action Step that moves one into humility. By asking (prayer).

Another part of humility is represented in (service) over and over again, we are told that through service we will enhance our recovery, while at the same time help someone else. By focusing on the needs of others as they see them, we respond in a way that is useful and helpful. Responding to the needs of others, as we would have them respond to us, we superimpose our values and our way of living on theirs. We see value in giving(our) way. We don't understand why it isn't received in the same manner. We aren't practicing humility. It is said that in about the same degree as we are helpful, we will be happy. The service work we are called to do in recovery is a result of our spiritual awakening. The message in the Sixth and Seventh Steps produce other centeredness. We, by the grace of God, care less about ourselves and more about our fellows. Basically we are born to help one another. When we pass on our recovery, we keep it. This spiritual paradox becomes an all determining reality for us: to keep what we have found, we must give it away. Service becomes a way of life.

Question one – what is truly humble?

Question two – is it being open to learning from those we serve? Or is it assuming that we have the better way to give, and if they don't receive it, well, were still sober, so it was a good experience?

Statement

If humility, being humble, is valuable to us, then we must learn to model it. Practice humility. We do the Sixth Step by surrendering to becoming entirely ready and conscious of our defects and shortcomings. Then the Seventh Step becomes natural.

Question one – what other values, spiritual and otherwise do we hold and how do we demonstrate them?

Question two – have we examined closely the meaning and purpose of our life?

Question three – the Sixth and Seventh Steps are really asking us, what is important to us? And, if it is so important, where does it show in our life?

Statement

Here is where we have to get to the basics. It is easy to avoid this and think we've worked the Steps, but if we don't look closely at the meaning and purpose of what we are doing, the whole context of our action loses its value.

Question one – What is the value in your life?

Question two – How is our life giving meaning to others? Are we helping?

Question three – Are we part of the solution or part of the problem? How does it show?

Question four – How is our Higher Power part of our life and how does it show?

Question five – What value do we give to spirituality and how does it show?

From the answers to these questions, our ability to share, give, act, and practice humility.

We were seeking an unreal world of complete security, romance, and approval, and the more we try to control (demand) these things, the more chaos we created. It becomes clear to us in getting sober that we have to change. I like what Bill Wilson has to say about these rude awakenings in this passage from the 12 and 12:

And as we grow spiritually, we find that our old attitude toward our instincts need to undergo drastic revisions. Our desires for emotional security and wealth, for personal prestige and power, for romance, for family satisfactions – all these have to be tempered and redirected. We have learned that the satisfaction of instincts cannot be the sole end and aim of our lives. If we placed instincts first, we have got the cart before the horse; we shall be pulled backward into disillusionment. But when we are willing to place spiritual growth first – then and only then do we have a real chance. (Page 114)

Humility seems to be the basic ingredient for transforming pain into growth. In Step Seven of the 12 and 12, humility is defined as the perspective to see that character building and spiritual values have to come first, and the material satisfactions are not the purpose of living." We learn that "an honest desire to seek and do God's will is necessary for humility". "What an order I cannot go through with it," used to be my initial reaction to growing through the Steps. I could accept solutions intellectually, but when it came to practical application, I had trouble I know today that I don't have to do it perfectly; it takes time to get better. I know that I don't have to do it alone, that I have a wealth of wisdom and support in this fellowship at my disposal, and that gives me hope for change, growth, and new frontiers.

The next aspect of the Seventh Step we will discuss is that of perspective. Bill W. Addressed this issue of perspective in a very famous AA grapevine article in the 1950s about (emotional sobriety) he was afraid that many people were missing the point of the 12 Steps by focusing so narrowly on the addictive practice that brought them to the program – in his case, alcohol. As it points out in the big book, alcohol (or drugs, sex, food, gambling, and so on) is just a symptom. The underlying disease is much more subtle and insidious than the gross outer behaviors might suggest. It raises the question of what the addictive behavior is masking. Those in recovery must be doubly on guard against compulsive behavior and mood altering through habitual activities or substances. In the light of what Bill Wilson said about emotional sobriety and the symptom of the disease, it is imperative that members open their perspective to a larger view. The nature of the Seventh Step asks us to humbly be willing to let go and practice what we learned. If we must defend a lifestyle that appears to be unhealthy and addictive, are we being humble and willing? Where else in our lives are their addictive patterns? Those in recovery have to be very careful to be willing to grow and change and move past old habits of relating and to put new spiritual values into their lives.

Question one – How are the relationships in our life?

Question two – What patterns have we developed and how are they changing now?

Question three- Are we willing to examine that part of our life?

Question four – Are you willing to ask for Gods help in changing it? God's guidance?

A new perspective can also be called the "surrender attitude", in the practical application of the Seventh Step it could be said that whenever I find myself tight or bordering on panic, I fall on my knees (figuratively or literally, if I can) my life is marked by(a series of surrenders) and has never been better.

Next area we will discuss his learning to understand our fear. As was stated in the discussion of the Six Step, self-centered fear is seen as the chief activator of our character defects. It can be stated that many of the faces of fear are character defects. Many of us tend to deny and sublimate fear, as it shows up in our lives as procrastination, greed, tardiness, over achievement, underachievement, poor diet, escape reading, self-pity, indecision, overspending, gossiping, lying, smoking, shyness, aggressiveness, bragging, and many more. If it is true that there are only two emotions in life, love and fear, that all that we don't do out of love, we are doing out of fear... It certainly makes one wonder, doesn't it? In recovery we must constantly challenge ourselves to see which emotions we are acting from. Am I giving love? Or am I acting out of fear? Am I frozen out of fear? We must constantly examine our motives and be willing to own and name our feelings. For many of us, the unnamed fears and a sense of impending doom haunted us during our active addiction days. Those same feelings, and more subtle form, may still be active in our lives. The way to get through fear is action – and

to ask for help. That is what the Seventh Step is primarily about the hardest part of this Step is facing our fear. It may be the hardest part of life. The fifth Step gives us the means to do it. By moving into humility and specific action, we can, ask for help where we needed it, we can give up acting through our character defects. We must develop a vision – and a willingness to put that vision into action. How do we find the fear and anger active in our lives and bring it to an awareness level that we can deal with it in a healthy manner? That is probably the root question for the Sixth and Seventh Step. Have we found it? How do we find our fear and name it, and how do we deal with it once we found it? The fourth and fifth Steps have given us a big head start on this, but for most of us, the fourth and fifth Steps were anything but "fearless". Now that we have some recovery under our belts, it may be time for a new look at our fear.

Step seven and everyday life.

When the two of us first took Step seven some years ago, we were concerned about how we'd be able to make a living if we had to be unselfish, honest, courageous, and considerate. Since then we've learned that following the principles is much better, easier, saner, and a more comfortable way to live – and a much less stressful way too. For one thing, these principles don't cause any guilt or remorse. For another, you feel a lot better about yourself – and don't have to worry about getting caught doing things that land you in trouble. You will also get along a lot better with people.

Step seven isn't something you just do once and get it over with. You have to practice it regularly, on a daily basis. At first, this may mean making yourself do what you don't want to do. But as you establish this new pattern of thinking, acting, and living, you resist less and less and eventually you want to do all those things you're doing. At this point, we don't have to make ourselves do anything anymore. You just do what you know is right. And when you're not sure what's right, you ask your higher power for guidance. As you continue to practice Step seven and live according to program principles, you start responding with love and patience; these slowly become more and more a part of your personality. Your old ideas die and are replaced with better ones. You will eventually see revolutionary changes in your life. Your relationship with your higher power, with yourself and with other people will become better. It is time to become aware of our body. Most of us go through life totally unaware of our body and its reactions. We live in our head and rarely give much "thought" to our body. If we want to know fear and anger, we need to know our body. The first awareness to develop is that of our breathing. Breath is directly connected to both the autonomous nervous system and the voluntary nervous system. In other words, we can control our breathing, and it goes on automatically when we are not aware of it – unconscious, asleep, all with our attention elsewhere. Breathing is one of the few functions of the body through which we can directly affect our feelings. It is also something we can directly check to see how we are feeling. It is very easy to verify. Think back to the last time you were really scared. Totally afraid. Think about the circumstances and how you felt. How were you breathing? Chances are you were breathing rapidly and shallowly and holding your breath. Both are very common reactions to fear. Both are almost universally ignored. If we want to know how we feel, we should check our breathing. If we want to change how we feel, we need to change how we breathe. When a health practitioner, teacher, wants someone to relax what is the first thing they say? That's right, take a deep breath." Deep emotions tends to make us breathe differently. The more aware we are of our breathing, the more connected we are to our emotion.

Dr. Silkworth pointed out in the big book that unless an alcoholic can experience an entire psychic change there is very little hope of recovery. "An entire psychic change" is nothing short of continual growth. Growth is almost always uncomfortable for all of us. Most of us just want to be comfortable we usually try to rationalize the defects away try to blame someone else. I can sometimes become increasingly aware of a particular defect that I am afraid to give up afraid of what will become of me, afraid of what God might change me into. What if I didn't like what happened? These thoughts can often block me from God. Because of my fear of change there was a lack of true understanding of Step seven.

Another way we can gain more knowledge of our fear and anger is by noticing our habitual holding spots, or where in our body we hold our stress. We each hold emotions in different places of our bodies "it was like being kicked in the guts!" "It knocked the wind right out of me". "I feel rubber kneed. And stiff as a board". "My stomach is on fire". "My neck is so stiff that I can't turn my head". All these statements are about physical symptoms of emotional states. Not too many of us take the time to make the connection and to correct the underlying causes. Your mind is a terrible place to live!

Question one – Do your wonderful daydreams often turn into stressful nightmares?

Question two – Does your mind magnify your emotions and let your character defects out of their cage?

Question three – Does your mind/ego tell you that you're more in love than you are, angrier than you are, more powerful than you are, and, mostly, more miserable than you are?

We can let stress push us into isolation, we can become prey to what the program calls stinking thinking. There is only stress when my mind is allowed to work its own way. I need people. I need the fellowship. I need to humbly ask God for help. The benefit of the Sixth and Seventh Step is balance, a feeling of being centered . If we lean in one direction, we lose our balance and fall over. There is a balance these Steps teach us between selfishness and selflessness. We need to be careful to organize our time, establish boundaries, and set priorities. Recovery is not a stressful race to see who can do the most. The Sixth and Seventh Step are a beautiful unfolding of a relationship between you and your God. With all the awareness of the stress response and how to deal with it that has been brought to light in the past 30 years, it is still amazing how few people use that knowledge to lessen the stress and debilitating emotions in their life. Ask yourself these questions.

Question one – How many of us carry anger and fear in our back and neck?

Question two – How does our solar plexus feel the more we get uptight?

Question three – How is our stomach? Indigestion? Ulcers?

Question four – Do you get headaches regularly?

Question five – Do you grit your teeth or grind them in your sleep?

It is important to become aware of how we place emotions in our body and to start releasing our habitual patterns of holding them. Probably the easiest and best method of letting go of fear and anger is through exercise. It not only benefits us through the actual physical exertion, but it also gives us psychological and mental release. The endorphins and dopamine that are released through aerobic exercise of very beneficial. Exercise is a wonderful way to do a moving meditation and to practice spiritually.

- Dance
- yoga
- long walks
- material arts
- movement classes
- sports

these are all ways of getting in touch with our bodies and releasing our holding patterns. Fear is a fact of life. Those people who prosper and grow with their fear are those who move through it. We learn to recognize fear in our body and move with it and through it. We do something to release it – physically. It is important that we practice awareness, acceptance, and surrender about our physical well-being. After practicing a physical approach, a spiritual and mental approach will be very effective. This is where prayer and meditation, as we discussed in the Sixth Step, can be of great help. Prayer is how we put our humility into action. Prayer and meditation are frequently associated with the third and 11th Step. However, it is extremely important to recognize the place of prayer in humbly asking. How else are we to approach a higher power when asking for help? Knowing our place in life, knowing where we stand with our defects, being aware of the process of change in growth – recognizing all of these factors in our lives makes it very plain that we can use all the help we can get. We get that help by asking.

It is(our) awareness and consciousness that need to be addressed, not our higher powers. If we don't become accountable and responsible, then it doesn't matter what we ask for – we won't get it. A lot of people talk about asking and giving in a manner consistent with their spiritual beliefs yet say they are not where they want to be in life. They never stop to consider that they've given away the accountability for their lives and, along with it, the ability to change. We ask our higher power for direction and grace but remain accountable for the decisions we make. It is by God's grace that we have free will. Asking and surrendering are not the same as giving up accountability and choice. What do we ask for in our prayer? It seems that a humble prayer would contain a request for an awareness of those character defects that hurt ourselves and others. It would also ask for ways or methods of ridding ourselves of those defects. It might be thankful for all the progress we've already been given and all the gifts in our lives. It might also ask that we be shown ways to provide greater service. Such a prayer, which may be the way to work Step seven, goes something like this.

God, thank you for the gift of recovery and for all the benefits in my life. Please allow me to be open and grateful for the bounty of friends, family, growth, and much more in my life. Please help me to gain an awareness of those shortcomings that hinder my service to others, myself, and you. Please help me find a way to remove those character defects in my life, both the ones I'm currently aware of and those that I may gain awareness of later. Help me become who and what I may become, in order to give more. Amen.

A gentle, open prayer for help and of Thanksgiving surely will help pave the way for change. We don't need to make it a struggle or an epic. Our prayer can be a gradual, gentle process. We choose. We get to determine how it will go with our willingness and our humility. Don't we owe it to ourselves to explore the potential of our spiritual natures as completely as possible? Isn't practicing and working with prayer a way of showing our commitment to the program and of increasing the depth and width of our recovery? Doesn't belief proceed action?

These are very interesting questions and ones that are at the heart of working Steps Six and seven. Are we willing to become aware of our defects and to ask for help? Pretty fundamental, isn't it? Yet many of us are not ready or willing to do "too much" in working the Steps. It is easier, and may be more rewarding in the short term, to do another inventory and fifth Step it is more fulfilling and satisfying to get on with making amends. Yet, if we don't give our full effort and attention to these Steps, we may miss an opportunity to change the whole way we experience life, which includes balancing our character defects and the principles of the program. Asking through prayer is a simple and direct way of putting our attention into action. Are we willing to change? Or do we want to hold on to the old ways of doing and being? It is at this point – when we've made the decision to be entirely ready and to humbly ask, and we have put into action what we can, and we are acting "as if" – that most of us let the Sixth and Seventh Steps slip away. We don't trust the process.

Question one – Are you ready for defect removal?

Question two – Are you willing to trust?

Question three – Are you willing to learn or change?

Question four – Are you willing to be willing?

These are the first conditions of working with God on any problem. I had to show God I want to be alcohol free, and I had to ask God for help on a daily, consistent basis, and most of all, I had to mean what I said. I had to be willing to be released from the compulsion. I had to be convinced that alcohol use was not to my benefit. I had to say, "I can't". You can. Please help me. Foxhole prayers never

worked for my drinking, and they won't work for any of my other character defects. I can't ask God to help me overcome my desire for potato chips when I am finishing off another bag. I can't ask God to help me overcome my lust when I'm giving into it again. I can't ask for help if I am not willing to be helped. I've got to do my part in order for God to do his.

Trust, in many different forms and areas, may be one of the biggest issues facing us in recovery. We lost the ability to trust ourselves through years of denial, rationalization, and addictive behavior and good intentions with little follow-through. Many of us lost the ability to trust others early in life when we were faced with loved ones who professed love than hurt us -emotionally, physically, or sexually. We may have been abandoned in many different ways and in many different relationships. We may have been abused and shamed. We may have perpetuated all those things on others. Trusting ourselves and others, trusting God, after all we've been through it is asking a lot. Yet, if we are to gain the ability to grow to our full potential through the program and the 12 Steps, especially the Sixth and Seventh Steps, we must learn to trust.

How do we learn to trust, and what are the elements of trust? Trust, like surrender, has elements of being passive and of being active. It takes action to trust. And it takes an opening for surrendering to our feelings and being vulnerable. We talked about these elements at the beginning of Steps Six, and we've come to full circle to discuss them again in the completion of Step seven. Letting go of counting on results and instead surrendering to the process is what trust is about. If we've given all we have in being willing and ask for help and put it into action, our higher power will be there to remove our shortcomings and give the help we need.

The element of doubt arises because we don't know that we've done all we could do to be ready and willing. So, rather than trusting that we've done what we could do, we doubt. Or we begin to look at ways we don't deserve to change and receive the bounty of the universe and the rewards of letting go of our defects, and we begin, at a subconscious level, to sabotage our efforts and the perceptions.

We gain trust the same way that some old-style investment houses get money -we earn it. We gain trust for ourselves by being trustworthy. Isn't that a great word? Trustworthy. It is a very valuable word and an invaluable insight. We become capable of trusting by being trustworthy. It boils down to our personal integrity our responsible action. All the questions we've been asking ourselves about how we live and relate and think and feel gain focus when we decide on a harmonious way of living.

Question one – Do you live a spiritual life?

Question two – Do we live as though we've taken a 3rd and 11th Step?

Question three- Do we act "as if"?

The more our actions come into line with our intentions, the more trustworthy we become. When our actions are out of line, we must surrender to the process, ask for help, and trust that it will be forthcoming. We may not be able to pick the form or method of help. May not recognize it when it arrives, but it does come. Usually it arrives in the form of an opportunity to do some work. Or it arrives in the form of crisis that might give us a way of seeing things differently.

Trust is twofold in nature;(1) learning to trust ourselves by being true to our integrity and giving full effort and willingness, and(2) surrendering to the process and knowing that help is available if we ask, and understanding that if we don't see the help, it may be that we are unable to see, not that it is unavailable. Trust comes through action. By acting worthy of trust, we gain the trust of others and ourselves. By acting trustworthy, we begin to see the help available when we are out of line with our spiritual intentions and our willingness to change. This is when we gain a true understanding of the process of the Sixth and Seventh Steps and begin to see the lessons take hold in our lives the only thing we used to trust where the things we were addicted to. Only when we began to put our trust in the program and higher power, the destruction stopped and recovery began.

The action of the Sixth and Seventh Steps culminates in dropping the rock. We let go of those things pulling us down and keeping us from being the most help we can be in service to ourselves and others. We trust in our higher power, and we trust in the process. We surrender what can be surrendered and work out the rest. We come to understand that our life has purpose. The Sixth and Seventh Steps are where the movement into serenity begins. Through Step five, we've been learning to know a higher power, seeing the nature of our addictions, and admitting the wreckage of our past. Now we are ready for action. Up to now, it is been mostly internal work. We stopped our active addictive behavior, but have we changed the way we think, behave, and feel? It is no mistake that we must begin to do and understand these Steps before making amends. If we are not willing to change our behavior, then where is the value in an amend? These Steps are action Steps, down and dirty, to require accountability, and they require action – two reasons that most people avoid them or make them into, "noddors". And after amends, we keep working these Steps as we gain more awareness about ourselves. We come to understand how our character defects are the opposite of the principles of our program. The longer our time in recovery, the easier it is to fool ourselves and others that we've done these Steps. We need to take a very close look at all the implications of these two quite Steps and become responsible for working them during our entire recovery journey. Please join in working toward "emotional sobriety", recovery with balance, by taking a new look at the Sixth and Seventh Steps. Then jump into action and surrender, making positive progress to a continuing series of spiritual awakenings. We spend less time thinking about changing our character defects. We mature. We change our character defects.

The answers
will come
when your own house
is in order

God's spirit will grace you to accept yourself as you are and move you forward to greater realms of abundant life. If you are facing extreme anxiety and fear in any area, I believe that the spirit of God wants to expand your boundaries. Why live captive the rest of

your life? The spirit is free and in the business of freeing people. Freedom won't, come in a magical moment of deliverance. The spirit will work with you and help you as you courageously grapple with your own issues. It is the spirit who will convince you that you can be free. God's spirit will whisper to you and help you to be determined not to give up. The spirit will lead you to do what you must do to become liberated and the spirit of God will be with you every Step of the way to bring emancipation to your life. In all these things, we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. No excuses!!