

Recovering Couples Anonymous 12 Step Guide

Recovering Couples Anonymous Diversity Statement

The only requirement for membership in RCA is a desire to remain in a committed relationship. Committed relationships include, but are not limited to, all adult relationships regardless of age, sexual orientation, gender identification, religious background, culture, race, class, national origin, recovery affiliation, physical or mental challenge, or political persuasion. The RCA Fellowship actively supports the practice of valuing differences both within a coupleship and among couples of diverse backgrounds. Embracing our differences to achieve serenity! Why is diversity important to the RCA fellowship? Because; each of us, being different, make a richer contribution to the whole!

How Do We Practice Diversity?

1. We acknowledge and accept our differences
2. We affirm what we have in common
3. We accept the fact that growth can be messy
4. We give the other person the benefit of the doubt
5. We use mirroring techniques for conflict resolution
6. We sponsor other couples
7. We are honest
8. We maintain an open mind
9. We maintain a willingness to change
10. We engage in active listening (non-defensive listening)
11. We demonstrate Compassion
12. We enjoy each other

RCA PREAMBLE

Ours is a fellowship of recovering couples. We suffer from many different addictions, and we share our experience, strength, and hope with each other that we may solve our common problems and help other recovering couples restore their relationships. The only requirement for membership is a desire to remain committed to each other and to develop new intimacy. There are no dues or fees for membership; we are self-supporting through our own contributions. We are not allied with any organization. We do not wish to engage in any controversy, neither endorse nor oppose any causes. Although there is no organizational affiliation between Alcoholics Anonymous and our fellowship, we are based on the principle of AA Our primary purpose is to stay committed in loving and intimate relationships and to help other couples achieve freedom from addicted and destructive relationships.

The Twelve Steps of RCA:

1. We admitted we were powerless over our relationship and that our life together had become unmanageable.
2. We came to believe that a power greater than ourselves could restore us to commitment and intimacy.
3. We made a decision to turn our wills and our life together over to the care of God as we understood God.
4. We made a searching and fearless moral inventory of our relationship together as a couple.
5. We admitted to God, to each other, and to another couple the exact nature of our wrongs.
6. We were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character, communication and caring.
7. We humbly asked God to remove our shortcomings.
8. We made a list of all persons we had harmed and became willing to make amends to them all.
9. We made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.
10. We continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it to our partner and to others we had harmed.
11. We sought through our common prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God, as we understood God, praying only for knowledge of God's will for us and the power to carry that out.
12. Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these Steps, we tried to carry this message to other couples, and to practice these principles in all aspects of our lives, our relationship, and our families.

Step 1

We admitted we were powerless over our relationship - that our lives together had become unmanageable.

We all have family-of-origin issues and a history of relationships. We may not have gotten what we needed emotionally, physically, mentally or spiritually when we were growing up. There may have been abuse (physical, sexual, spiritual, emotional), abandonment, or deprivation. We all bring "baggage" to the coupleship. The steps teach us how to look at our baggage and how to reverse the process of blame.

Both of us are responsible for the presence or absence of intimacy between us. As soon as each of us accepts mutual responsibility, we are ready for the First Step of RCA. Step One involves taking 200% responsibility for the health or disease of the relationship. Each person carries 100%.

Occasionally a couple may not have been far enough along in their individual recoveries to be able to answer the following questions, or they may have gotten into a fight or into dysfunction simply by having issues raised. If this were the case, we encouraged step work be done only in the presence of a sponsoring couple.

We also recognized that some couples came to our meetings having met after both partners had been in individual recovery for various periods of time. They may not have had a long history of coupleship dysfunction or other dysfunction. In those cases, Step One involved understanding old dysfunctional patterns with other partners. It also involved understanding family-of-origin issues, personality traits and other individual issues that might have affected the relationship.

Writing is very important. It is suggested that the couple take one pencil and one piece of paper and begin the process together. RCA is about the "we"-ness and "us"-ness of our relationship. In Recovering Couples Anonymous, we open ourselves up to a new way of thinking and living in coupleship.

Now that you have that piece of paper, make a couple decision. Who will hold the pencil and do the writing? Are you able to share, negotiate or compromise? Is there a power struggle? Are you ready to take the First Step? Now read aloud the "Safety Guidelines." Divide the paper in half with a line down the middle. Make a list. You are now ready to answer the following questions:

What dysfunctional roles had we brought from our families-of-origin?

What had our family-of-origin model taught us about relationships?

What were our individual experiences of abuse and how had those affected our ability to be related, to be intimate, and to be sexual?

How had our individual addictions affected our relationship?

What were the unmanageable issues we never seemed to resolve? (e.g., how we spend money, how we spend our time together, parenting the kids, dividing the household duties, where/how we celebrated holidays, etc.)

How had these issues brought us to anger and what were our patterns of expressing anger?

How had we felt hopeless about our relationship?

In order to save our relationship, what measures had we tried that hadn't seemed to work?

How had we fought unfairly?

Having surrendered thus far, we were ready to take Step 2.

Step 2

We came to believe that a power greater than ourselves could restore us to commitment and intimacy.

In Step One we admitted we were powerless over our relationship. Step Two involves coming to some mutual understanding of what we trusted as a couple and what we believed in as a couple.

We sought to blend our heritage and to find something to believe as a couple. We made a collage of this belief to have a visual picture of our "greater power."

We found this helpful to frame and keep accessible to our relationship and to share with other couples. We were willing to accept a Higher Power and nurture our relationship with a sense of hope and freedom.

We also found more intimacy in sharing with each other our Second Steps from our individual programs. We may have come from different religious backgrounds or no religious background at all. Writing the step remains a useful tool in relationships. We suggest you share one pencil and piece of paper as you do the steps. These are a list of questions to consider as you discover the spiritual path of recovery for yourselves.

Pause and read aloud the Safety Guidelines (see end of Step 2) before moving forward.

What family-of-origin messages about religion or spirituality had we brought into the relationship?

What kinds of instruction, modeling, teaching, etc. about religion or spirituality had we experienced?

Did we receive any guidance from our parents?

What abuses and/or dysfunctional beliefs about couples did we learn from our religion? What healthy and supportive beliefs did we learn from our church, synagogue or other house of worship?

Had we experienced any spiritual abuse? (Were one of our parents the higher power in your family-of-origin? Were clergy, religious teachers or nuns unkind, shaming, blaming or belittling?)

Had we felt angry about religion, God, or our heritage?

Had we trusted and accepted or mistrusted and rejected the religious traditions of our partner?

What had been our spiritual history as a couple?

Proceed to Step Three.

SAFETY GUIDELINES

Suggested RCA Meeting Safety Guidelines

Anonymity and mutual respect of boundaries are essential to providing a healing experience to each of us. Most of us have had great difficulty establishing our boundaries, assertiveness, and personal space. We are sensitive to crosstalk. Our purpose is not to give advice or try to fix one another, but rather to create a safe environment where we can experience and share our pain. We have found that:

1. It is OK to feel.
2. It is OK to make mistakes.
3. It is OK to have respectful conflict.
4. It is OK to have needs and ask for them to be met.
5. It is important to respect others (partners and others in the group). It is important to avoid self-righteous statements, baiting or button-pushing statements, case-building statements, and the taking or sharing of another person's inventory.
6. It is important to respect ourselves and to avoid self put-downs and self-pity. It is helpful to take ownership of our own story and to take credit for our progress and work in recovery.
7. Anonymity is our spiritual foundation. Who you see here, what you hear here, when you leave here, let it stay here.

We have care and concern for ourselves and for our coupleships. We meet to both receive and provide the nurturing our relationships need to grow and endure. For that reason, it is important for us to act and speak respectfully to our partners and others. As we do this, we value the group and the relationships within it.

Step 3

We made a decision to turn our wills and our life together over to the care of God as we understood God.

Together two people who are in a committed relationship form a coupleship, a oneness, a distinct and separate entity. This coupleship has a life of its own and needs to be nurtured appropriately. Couple recovery depends on this nurturance. Both partners need individual recovery: meetings, sponsors, therapy, a support group, spirituality, recreation, vocation and other individual interests. A coupleship needs these same elements for couple recovery.

Trust is said to be a major issue for couples, as their experience of trust was violated in previous relationships/family-of-origin.

Step Three involved what we decided to trust together and how we decided to turn our relationship over to a "Higher Power."

Before Step Three could be completed, we went on a "spiritual quest." Bring out your piece of paper and begin a "list" again. On all of your steps, "date" your papers so in referring to them you are able to monitor your growth in this program. "Spiritual quests" vary widely and can involve things such as:

- start each day with thanksgiving to our Higher Power
- reading scripture together
- doing daily meditations
- going to church or other house of worship
- going to study groups
- praying together
- a daily walk to enjoy nature
- making a trip or a retreat to a spiritually significant place

These quests could have taken days, months or years before a mutually acceptable "statement of faith" would occur. We were encouraged to write down a quest agreement. It could be in longhand, or typed suitable for framing and witnessed by "couple" friends or a "sponsoring couple." This presents a truly warm, supportive and validating experience for all people involved. It is suggested the couple chair a "step meeting" in RCA and share their experience, strength and hope with other couples.

Ultimately, Step Three involved turning our relationship over.

Many couples found it significant to do something formal, traditional (even sacramental) or non-traditional. An example of this was a re-dedication of vows in the presence of friends or even someone of spiritual authority. Some people have re-dedicated their coupleship in a church or synagogue. Some have gone to a bed and breakfast, some have had a picnic with friends in the park, or invited guests to their home for a celebration of their spiritual renewal.

We are invited to be a creative couple and have a memorable event celebrating our increasing commitment to ourselves, each other, and the relationship.

Recognize that we are both on a spiritual path together. Placing our relationship in our Higher Power's hands would mean the end of power struggles and control. We made a decision. We have surrendered. And this is the basic spiritual principle upon which Step Three stands.

Proceed to Step 4

Step 4

We made a searching and fearless moral inventory of our relationship together as a couple.

Each partner needs first to look at the impact of their behavior on the relationship. After having shared the individual inventories with each other, the inventory of the coupleship is completed. The goal of this inventory is to gain awareness about the extent of the damage has the illness caused. We must fearlessly face our coupleship. When a couple is able to face the reality of their relationship, they can grow in their love based on honesty. Review these questions about your personal role in the relationship:

Unfinished Business: In what ways have I not finished things with my partner, letting them go and fester?

Hypervigilance: In what ways have I looked for things to go wrong?

Self-Responsibility: In what ways have I failed to take responsibility for my mistakes or issues?

Comfort and Feelings: In what ways have I not shared uncomfortable feelings with my partner?

Accuracy and Honesty: In what ways have I placated my partner or opposed sharing real perceptions?

Connection: In what ways have I not been available to my partner? Do I seek regular ways to connect?

Stress: In what ways do my overextension and stress affect my partner?

Separateness: Do I develop a separate life away from my partner? Does this separate life include friends and activities?

Personal Needs: In what ways is my partner to guess or "know" about my needs? Do I ask for them to be met clearly?

Shame Avoidance: In what ways do I seek to put blame on my partner?

Pain Thresholds: In what ways have I tolerated pain that was unnecessary?

Choice Clarity: In what ways have I been unclear about my choices, leaving things undecided or up to my partner?

To complete the inventory, review together these questions and record your answers on a single piece of paper. Writing helped us organize our thoughts. Begin by reading aloud the Safety Guidelines (see end of Step 2). Answer the following questions as a couple:

In what ways have we created crisis when there wasn't any?

In what ways have we had fights which really never accomplished anything?

How have we neglected instead of nurtured our relationship?

How do we avoid being close when we have the opportunity to have intimacy?

In what ways do we pretend these problems do not exist?

In what ways have we isolated ourselves from other couples and friends who could support our relationship?

In what ways have we been depleted both physically and emotionally so we had nothing to give one another?

In what ways have we tolerated abuse of ourselves and our family?

What are our social and physical strengths?

How had the disease of our relationship affected us socially, financially, and physically?

What had we grieved together as a couple? How did we grieve?

What did our process look like?

What were our losses, (e.g. having never achieved our financial goals, having children with problems, having a dysfunctional sexual relationship, etc.)?

Despite our dysfunctions, what had we liked about our relationship?

What had been the good things?

What had we treasured in each other and the coupleship?

You are now ready for Step Five.

Step 5

We admitted to God, to each other and to another couple the exact nature of our wrongs.

Most of us chose to share our Fourth Step with a Sponsoring Couple or some other couple who had been in the program long enough to have worked most of the Twelve Steps. It was also important to give this inventory to a couple who were, in our opinion, living the program.

This process of doing the Fifth Step was a vehicle to self-acceptance in our coupleship. This may have been difficult because some aspects and behavior of the relationship were shameful. This was our opportunity to have our guilt and shame transformed into humility.

Call your Sponsoring Couple on the telephone and schedule an evening to share your inventory. Allow about two hours in length. Choose a safe place. Get a good night's sleep. Consume your evening meal before meeting. Do not be rushed or committed to anything else that evening/time. Get comfortable--have tea, juice or coffee available. The Sponsoring Couple has a piece of paper and pencil handy to make notes for later input. Allow the couple to share at their own pace--and keep focused. As part of this process, the Sponsoring Couple has the opportunity to practice active listening.

Start with a moment of silence and then the Serenity Prayer. Follow by reading the Safety Guidelines aloud.

We found that sharing honestly and openly with another couple was healing for both the grief and shame. We realized the coupleship was accepted, validated and appreciated in spite of the dysfunctional behaviors.

We encourage couples to record their experience in a journal. We also find it helpful for the Sponsoring Couple to provide a written impression of the Sponsored Couple's 5th Step. Feedback can be given either in the journal, in the Big Book, or in a note or a card of encouragement.

This step freed us to begin anew.

Proceed to Step Six.

Step 6

We were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character, communication and caring.

Step 6 has a clear message--get ready for some changes! This step emphasizes relationship building and improvement. Relationship building involved recognizing the wrongs, professing them and becoming willing to get rid of them.

Every recovering couple has a series of patterns in which they can lose their reality. These patterns usually occur at times of high stress or periods of overextension or depletion. Sometimes these dysfunctional patterns occur when there is an opportunity for intimacy. One or both partners elect to avoid closeness by going to the old patterns. Recovering couples need to recognize the patterns and the temporary insanity these patterns bring and how a couple can lose their reality together.

Here are some clues for thinking about your loss of reality--or--how do we know when we are crazy?

Repetitive arguments

Frequent periods of denial

Nonproductive communications

Extreme overextension or depletion

Making statements you do not mean

Taking actions you regret

Fighting about issues that are not important

Make these lists together and pick a time to talk when you are both feeling balanced. You are now ready. Enjoy the process. See the humor. Open up to healing in your relationship.

Always start by reading the Safety Guidelines aloud.

Take your piece of paper to make lists and gather more information for your coupleship by answering the following questions:

What had been our dysfunctional patterns of relating?

What had been our dysfunctional patterns of communicating?

What had been our dysfunctional patterns of caring?

What had been our dysfunctional patterns of nurturing each other?

What had been our dysfunctional patterns of being sexual?

How had we fought unfairly?

If as a couple we don't work on our relationship, the same issues will surface with different partners in the next relationship. This means that we must practice couple recovery with our partner. Our couple issues were the same when we got into this relationship as they were in previous relationships.

Proceed to Step Seven

Step 7

We humbly asked God to remove our shortcomings.

In Step 7, we need to form a working partnership with a power greater than ourselves. We seek humility--the ability to face reality. The real change happened as we let go of our false pride and worked in partnership to make contracts to change.

The contracts we made were witnessed and signed by our sponsors. We felt validated in our relationship. We had something to remind us of our hard work in self/coupleship recovery.

As we defined our Higher Power, we asked how our trust in that Power could help us remove those defects of character. Where could we get help to know how to communicate, fight fairly, have a healthy sex life, etc.? RCA believes strongly in making contracts. We needed contracts about:

Sexuality: For example, we may have seen a therapist for insight and direction regarding specific attitudes and behaviors. We may have attempted celibacy contracts to take sexual pressure off our relationship in order to work on other issues. We may have needed contracts about how often, who initiates, etc. What were our sexual boundaries?

Producing Income: What are the dynamics of independence when one partner is financially dependent on another?

Division of Labor: What is the impact on the division of labor in the household when both partners work outside the home? When only one works outside the home? When both are retired?

Communicating: We were encouraged to look at the Safety Guidelines in order to know how to structure a contract about communicating. As partners, we were encouraged to use "I statements" rather than saying "you did..." or "you said..." This helped us each take individual responsibility for the coupleship and helped us avoid blame.

Recreation: How would we play together? We may have been abused out of our playfulness as a couple. We needed to deal with unresolved expectations. Why is having fun such hard work sometimes? A recreation contract was helpful for some couples.

Parenting: Who had certain responsibilities and when? Did we agree on discipline and what values we wished to pass on to our children? Did we stand united in our religious and/or philosophical beliefs? Or did we allow our children to be buffeted between two opposing viewpoints on life? Were we confused about our parenting roles? Did we allow our children to "divide and conquer?" Or did we maintain unity in parenting?

Fighting: Conflict is healthy but fighting unfairly is not. We took the list of how we fought unfairly from Steps One and/or Six, and made another list of fighting rules to guide us in conflict in the coupleship. These rules varied from couple to couple. For example, if we said, "We always quarrel unfairly after 11:00 p.m. We're just too tired," a fighting rule was that "We won't conduct a fight after 11:00 p.m." We may agree not to argue in the car or in front of the kids, etc. Some general rules that most couples implemented were:

- In order for a constructive argument to take place, both people must agree that there is indeed an issue in conflict and agree on an appropriate time and place to discuss this conflict. When agreement of a time and place is reached, all other "fighting" rules take effect.
- We won't name-call, shame, damage, use offensive language, or blame our partners. We will use "I statements" to express our needs, feelings and boundaries.
- We will have a certain time limit. When time is up we must reschedule a time to continue the dispute. We can call "time-out" or take "breaks," and we can cancel the fight if rules have been broken.
- For those of us who don't know how to fight or don't like to engage in any kind of conflict at all, we will agree to be honest about our feelings (including anger), even if this is only for 15 minutes.
- If we can't fight fairly by ourselves, or if we fear confrontation, we will have our verbalizing of disagreements only in the presence of our RCA sponsors or our therapist.
- We agree to avoid dramatic exits and to avoid physical abuse. We agree not to threaten divorce. If one of us needs an individual time-out to get in touch with feelings, to think about things or to feel safe, we can say, "This is not about my leaving the relationship or avoiding the conflict issue, but I am taking a break and will be back. Do you agree to meet in one hour (or tomorrow morning, etc.)? This is not about my abandoning the coupleship."

Again, these were just a few rules. The other rules varied according to the history of each coupleship. They may have seemed oppressive or cumbersome at first. We found that while we needed to be very intentional about them in the first months, they eventually became more automatic as they replaced our old behaviors and became "routine." The goal was to be able to express and hear anger in a healthy way. We experienced the ability to resolve conflict and fight fairly as a great gift of intimacy. Our fighting contracts were written out, each rule elaborated, and witnessed by our RCA sponsors.

Proceed to Step Eight

Step 8

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

Step 8 is about those people, including ourselves individually, who were harmed by our coupleship dysfunction: family members, children, friends, fellow workers, etc. This step helps us to interact with other people in a new way. This step calls for a change in our behavior. There is a logical sequence for us to follow. First we make a list again--discover how we had harmed ourselves first in the coupleship (i.e., venting rage or holding resentments). What was this harm like? Next, we asked ourselves about our thoughts and feelings about having done that harm. If our relationship has been as crazy as we know it to have been, then there has been harm to others.

Begin to list the "others."

We became willing to make amends by admitting this harm to ourselves and each other and by having changed the nature of our relationship with each other.

It helps to categorize the wrong doings into 3 groups:

Material Wrongs

Money--borrowing, spending, withholding
Contracts--cheating, not abiding by terms
Personal Abuse--physical, sexual

Moral Wrongs

Setting bad examples to anyone who looked to you for guidance
Excessive preoccupation or obsessions with people or projects in order to be unavailable to others
Sexual infidelity, broken promises, lying, verbal abuse

Spiritual Wrongs

Neglect of obligations to yourself, family, support group, community
Avoiding self-development
Lack of gratitude
Neglect of spiritual quest

Now we have a better idea about what dysfunctional and diseased behaviors have existed in our coupleship.

Now we take a look at the facts and list our fears. What is our resistance to making amends? Are we willing to accept the consequences of our behavior?

How had we intended to make our amends?

In this step, we continue to take our own inventory--as a couple. We check our own progress from time to time.

We reviewed our amends lists with our sponsors. Care was taken to not make amends which would hurt or injure others. When direct amends were not appropriate for couples or individuals we had harmed, we devised to make amends in other ways (i.e., prayed for the well being of these people, etc.)

We discovered that, as we become willing to look at our own behavior, we become more tolerant and forgiving, less rigid and judgmental of other couples. Our viewpoints, attitudes and beliefs are beginning to change as a result of our own participation in this process.

We became ready to move on to Step Nine.

Step 9

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

This is another action step and requires that we demonstrate a willingness to confront issues of our past. It takes courage to do this step, a careful sense of timing, and good judgment.

This step has been referred to as having "spiritual surgery" performed on us. Have your Eighth Step list available.

Most RCA couples, for example, begin by doing a Ninth Step with their children. We can make amends to our children by respecting them as individuals, by maintaining our own recovery, and by being healthy and reasonably happy adults ourselves.

Be careful not to confuse apologies with amends. Sometimes apologies are called for, but apologies are not amends. Amends are made by acting differently. For example, we can apologize ten times for being late to the meeting while we are the secretaries, but this will not "amend" the issue. Coming on time and changing our behavior thus becomes our amend.

When we repair the damage we have done to others, we will be "overhauling" our relationship. We will find a glow of satisfaction in knowing we have done everything to pay off every material, moral and spiritual debt we owe our fellow human beings.

When we looked at Step Eight, we realized we had put our own relationship at the top of the list. How do we make amends to ourselves?

First, get a new attitude, one which reflects a willingness to love and forgive ourselves. Think about what we want to say. Be clear. Perhaps we want to write it down and take responsibility for our actions. Both of us must be willing to turn the coupleship over to our Higher Power.

In preparation for the actual making of the amends, we devote time to prayer and meditation. We don't go on if either of us is angry or upset. We keep it simple. We can express a desire or ask permission. "I need to be aware of the harm I have done to others and take responsibility for my actions. I would like to make amends to us/you. Are you OK to receive it?"

Again, create a comfortable, safe setting--kitchen table, living room--choose the favorite place you like to go. Read the Safety Guidelines and open with a prayer. A sample amends may sound something like this:

"I want to make an amend to our relationship about _____. I forgive myself for all the words that were said out of fear (thoughtlessness, inconsideration, anger, immaturity, selfishness, etc.) and out of my own confusion. I wish no harm to our relationship. I didn't intend to cause you pain. I ask for your forgiveness. I plan to change my behavior by _____. "

Proceed to Step Ten

Step 10

We continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it to our partner and to others we had harmed.

The final three steps are about practicing what we have learned in the first nine steps.

Step Ten is about continuing to take inventory of our relationship. We believed that one part of this is what we call the "daily" or "weekly" inventory. The purpose of the daily or weekly inventory is to reverse the process of blaming behaviors that so often haunted many of us. It is also to teach each other what we really liked and what we really appreciate in each other. The hope is to find that this new behavior becomes so familiar and automatic that we can do it without needing to write everything down.

Each partner takes a sheet of paper and divides it in half. On one side of the paper each partner makes a list of those things he/she has done or said that day or week which has harmed the relationship. On the other side of the paper each partner makes a list of those things our partner has done that was helpful to the relationship. These lists are then shared with each other. This step supports our spiritual growth. How have I harmed the relationship? How has my partner helped the relationship?

Daily practice of Step Ten maintains our honesty and humility and allows us to continue growing. When we think we are home free and comfortable, we may no longer see a need to attend meetings. We begin to find excuses (i.e., we are too tired, it's too far to drive, it's raining out, etc.). If we choose this path, we will eventually realize our relationship is in jeopardy. We may become irritable, short-tempered, negative thinking and relapse to old patterns of behavior (i.e., avoidance, working, spending, isolation, busyness, control, manipulation, withholding feelings, difficulty with intimacy).

Remember that nothing stays the same in our lives or coupleships. We are either growing one step at a time or regressing backward toward old behavior.

The program suggests three types of ongoing inventories:

Spot-check inventory (what are my underlying motives for what I am doing).

Daily inventory (usually a "question" done on the run or just before going to sleep).

Long-term periodic inventory (twice yearly spiritual retreat or reflection on how you have changed and what are necessary corrections).

Proceed to Step Eleven

Step 11

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

In Step Eleven, we have an opportunity to develop a deepening relationship with our Higher Power. In our relationship, this step is about our spiritual awakening. We are conscious. We improve our conscious contact with our Higher Power through prayer and meditation. The only requirement for a prayer to be successful is that it be sincere, humble, and not for our own selfish gain. Meditation is an ancient art of quieting the mind and not thinking. Some of us in our relationship find it difficult to sit quietly and relax together free of mind chatter.

The miracle of this step is that we change the way we pray into a form of meditation. PRAYING ONLY FOR HIS/HER WILL FOR US.

When we are progressing with this step we will find a great sense of gratitude as a couple and a feeling of belonging and being worthy. We also get a sense of being guided and sustained as we work together as a couple.

Ultimate intimacy with your partner depends not only upon connecting emotionally, but also on connecting spiritually. At this time it's good to look at your spiritual quest in Step Three and to review what you may want to add or change.

We need to spend time together daily as a couple--not just on vacation!

In becoming aware of the presence of our Higher Power, we also need to be aware of our own rhythms with our partner--our breathing patterns, waking, sleeping, lovemaking, and work patterns. Forget about demands for a few minutes and get quiet inside together. Share this.

If we have difficulty praying or lack experience with prayer and meditation, it is suggested that we use the Serenity Prayer.

God grant us the serenity...

Serenity meaning that we no longer recoil from the past, live in jeopardy because of our behavior now, or worry about the unknown future. We seek regular times to re-create ourselves and we avoid those times of depletion which make us vulnerable to despair and to old self-destructive patterns.

To accept the things we cannot change...

Accept change in that we not cause suffering for ourselves by clinging to that which no longer exists. All that we can count on is that nothing will be stable except how we respond to the transforming cycles in our lives of birth, growth, and death.

Courage to change the things we can...

Which means remembering that to give up our attempts to control outcomes does not require we give up our boundaries or our best efforts. It does mean our most honest appraisal of the limits of what we can do.

And the wisdom to know the difference...

Wisdom becomes the never-forgotten recognition of all those times when there was no way out, and new paths opened up like miracles in our lives.

Proceed to Step Twelve

Step 12

Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these Steps, we tried to carry this message to other couples, and to practice these principles in all aspects of our lives, our relationship, and our families.

Step Twelve is about taking the message of couple recovery to other couples. As in our individual programs, in the RCA fellowship we carried the message in many ways:

Sharing as a couple at recovery meetings.

In coupleship, serving as meeting secretary-couple, treasurer, or greeter. Or we took the responsibility of literature couple, refreshment couple, inter-group representative, liaison couple, temporary and full-time sponsor couple.

Mentioning RCA to others at retreats or in our individual program meetings and making a schedule of meetings available.

Supporting the national convention through participation, voting as delegate, financial donation, or serving on the WSO Board.

Writing our couple stories and sharing these with others.

This Step is meant for a lifetime. We get this program when we give it away. The results affect all of our relationships, and if we have children, we will be breaking the chains of addiction that have bound families for generations. We all learn from those couples who have gone before us. The message we carry is a liberating one. Working with newcomers can be a rewarding experience.

While we look forward to even more extensive program materials in the future, we hope that our experience, comments and suggestions above are helpful to you now. As always, just as in AA and other older fellowships, our experiences of how we work the Steps as couples will form the ongoing history of RCA. We eagerly anticipate your comments, suggestions, and questions.

<http://recovering-couples.org>