

# Step 1: Admit that we, of ourselves, are powerless to overcome our addictions and that our lives have become unmanageable.

## Key Principle: Honesty

Many of us began our addictions out of curiosity. Some of us became involved because of a justifiable need (such as a prescription drug) or as an act of deliberate rebellion. Some of us began as an attempt to escape pain. Many of us started on this path when we were barely older than children. Whatever our motives and whatever our circumstances, we soon discovered that the addiction relieved more than physical pain. It eased stress or numbed our feelings. It helped us avoid our problems—or so we thought. For a while we felt free from fear, worry, loneliness, discouragement, regret, or boredom. But because life is full of conditions that prompt these kinds of feelings, we resorted to our addictions more often. Addiction became one of the main ways we tried to cope with our needs and emotions. The Savior Jesus Christ understands this struggle. President Spencer W. Kimball said, “Jesus saw sin as wrong but also was able to see sin as springing from deep and unmet needs on the part of the sinner” (“Jesus: The Perfect Leader,” *Ensign*, Aug. 1979, 5).

Still, most of us failed to recognize or admit that we had lost the ability to resist and abstain on our own. At our lowest point, many of us felt that we had few choices. As President Russell M. Nelson observed: “Addiction surrenders later freedom to choose. Through chemical means, one can literally become disconnected from his or her own will” (“Addiction or Freedom,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1988, 7).

We wanted to stop but had lost all hope. Filled with fear and despair, some of us even considered ending our life as the only alternative. But we realized this was not the path Heavenly Father wanted us to take.

It was difficult to admit to our addictive behaviors. We denied the seriousness of our condition and tried to avoid detection and the consequences of our choices by minimizing or hiding our behaviors. We didn’t realize that by deceiving others and ourselves, we slipped deeper into our addictions. As our powerlessness over addiction increased, many of us found fault with family, friends, Church leaders, and even God. We plunged into greater isolation, separating ourselves from others—especially God.

When we resorted to lies and secrecy, hoping to excuse ourselves or blame others, we weakened spiritually. With each act of lying about and hiding our addictions, we bound ourselves with “flaxen cord[s]” that soon became as strong as chains (2 Nephi 26:22). Then a time came when we were brought face-to-face with reality. We could no longer hide our addictions by telling lies or by saying, “It’s not that bad!”

A loved one, a doctor, a judge, or an ecclesiastical leader told us the truth we could no longer deny: the addiction was destroying our lives. When we honestly looked at our past, we

admitted that nothing we had tried on our own had worked. We acknowledged that the addiction had gotten worse. We realized how much our addictions had damaged our relationships and robbed us of any sense of worth. At this point, we took the first step toward freedom and recovery by finding the courage to admit this was more than a problem or bad habit.

We finally admitted the truth that our lives had become unmanageable and that we needed help to overcome our addictions. We acknowledged that we could not heal ourselves and admitted we could not stay sober while practicing our addiction in any form. We realized we needed help from God and others to be honest with ourselves. The amazing thing about this honest realization of defeat and our subsequent surrender was that recovery finally began.

Honesty is the foundation for all of the other steps and helps us realize our need for the Savior. President Dieter F. Uchtdorf, then of the First Presidency, taught: “Being able to see ourselves clearly is essential to our spiritual growth and well-being. If our weaknesses and shortcomings remain obscured in the shadows, then the redeeming power of the Savior cannot heal them and make them strengths [see Ether 12:27]” (“Lord, Is It I?,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2014, 58).

When we indulged in our addictions, we lied to ourselves and others, but we could not truly fool ourselves. We pretended we were fine, full of bravado and excuses. But somewhere deep inside, we knew indulging in our addictions would lead toward greater sorrow. The Light of Christ continued to remind us. Denying this truth was tiring; it was a relief to finally admit we had a problem. Finally, we allowed a tiny opening for hope to slip in. When we chose to admit we had a problem and were willing to seek support, we gave that hope a place to grow.

## Action Steps

This is a program of action. Our progress depends on consistently applying the steps in our daily lives. This is known as “working the steps.” The following actions help us come unto Christ and receive the direction and power necessary to take the next step in our recovery.

### **Let go of pride and seek humility**

Pride and honesty cannot coexist. Pride is an illusion and an essential element of all addiction. Pride distorts the truth about things as they are, as they have been, and as they will be. It’s a major obstacle to our recovery. President Ezra Taft Benson said:

“Pride is essentially competitive in nature. We pit our will against God’s. When we direct our pride toward God, it is in the spirit of ‘my will and not thine be done.’ ...

“Our will in competition to God’s will allows desires, appetites, and passions to go unbridled.

“The proud cannot accept the authority of God giving direction to their lives. They pit their perceptions of truth against God’s great knowledge, their abilities versus God’s priesthood power, their accomplishments against His mighty works” (*Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Ezra Taft Benson* [2014], 232).

At some point, we had to choose to let go of our pride and be honest about our addiction. It isn't easy to be humble, work through years of self-deception, and ultimately choose honesty, but over time, it becomes a great blessing.

It was a major turning point for us when we finally let go of our pride and became humble. Most of us didn't humble ourselves but were "compelled to be humble" (Alma 32:13). Either way, the consequences of our addictions caught up to us, and we lost things that were dear to us—our homes, our jobs, our families, and even our freedom. We lost the trust of family and friends. We lost our self-respect and our confidence to face the challenges of life. We reached our lowest point, and though the humility that resulted was painful, it was the beginning of our recovery.

Recovery from addiction is not easy; it requires hard work. But we finally realized that the price we paid to remain in our addictions was far greater than the price of recovery. As we let go of pride, we were ready to start on the path toward freedom from addiction.

### **Be honest and talk to someone**

An important action to help us be honest about our addictions is to talk with someone about it. Because our addictions have led us to justify, rationalize, and lie to others, including ourselves, many of us are experts in deception. This deception enables us to pursue our addictions, and it's hard for us to see things honestly. As we minimize and justify our behavior, we mistakenly think we are still in control. However, when we're open and up-front with another person, that person can help us see the truth and break through the deception.

The person we might want to talk to first is our Heavenly Father. We can pray and ask Him to help us be honest, see things more clearly, and have the courage to accept the truth. Then we can prayerfully think about someone else to talk to, someone who understands the gospel of Jesus Christ and the path to recovery. Choose someone you trust. It could be a spouse, parent, family member, Church leader, friend, coworker, therapist, sponsor, the missionaries, or a facilitator at a recovery meeting. After choosing someone, the next step is to share with them the ways we are struggling. We need to pray for courage to be as honest as we can about our addictions. (See the document "Support in Recovery.")

### **Attend meetings**

Recovery meetings are powerful sources of hope and support. Wherever we are, we can attend meetings in person or online. These meetings are a place to gather with others seeking recovery and with those who have already taken this path and are proof of its effectiveness. In recovery meetings, we find others who have experience in applying the steps and finding recovery and who are willing to help us in our own journey. Recovery meetings are a place of understanding, hope, and support.

At these meetings, we study specific gospel principles that can help change behavior. President Boyd K. Packer taught: "The study of the doctrines of the gospel will improve behavior quicker than a study of behavior will improve behavior. Preoccupation with unworthy behavior can lead to unworthy behavior. That is why we stress so forcefully the study of the doctrines of the gospel" ("Little Children," *Ensign*, Nov. 1986, 17). Meetings are

free and confidential. Go to [AddictionRecovery.ChurchofJesusChrist.org](http://AddictionRecovery.ChurchofJesusChrist.org) to find a meeting near you.

## Study and Understanding

Studying the scriptures and the statements of Church leaders helps us in our recovery. This study increases our understanding and helps us learn. We use the following scriptures, statements, and questions for prayerful personal study, writing, and group discussion.

The thought of writing may seem overwhelming, but writing is a powerful tool for recovery. Writing gives us time to reflect, helps us focus our thinking, and helps us see and understand the issues, thoughts, and behaviors surrounding our addictions. When we write, we also have a record of our thoughts. As we progress through the steps, we can see our progress. For now, just be honest and sincere as you write your thoughts, feelings, and impressions.

### **Are you convinced you are powerless over your addiction?**

“Addiction has the capacity to disconnect the human will and nullify moral agency. It can rob one of the power to decide” (Boyd K. Packer, “Revelation in a Changing World,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1989, 14).

- What are the signs that I am powerless over my addictive behavior?

Create a Note

- How is my addiction impacting me?

Create a Note

- What secrets do I hide from others?

Create a Note

- What extent have I gone to in order to engage in my addictive behavior?

Create a Note

- What morals or standards have I violated?

Create a Note

- How have I rationalized these choices?

Create a Note

### **Hunger and thirst**

“Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled” (Matthew 5:6).

“And my soul hungered; and I kneeled down before my Maker, and I cried unto him in mighty prayer and supplication for mine own soul; and all the day long did I cry unto him; yea, and when the night came I did still raise my voice high that it reached the heavens” (Enos 1:4).

- In these two scriptures, we learn that our souls can hunger. Have I ever felt empty inside, even when I am not physically hungry? What causes that emptiness?

Create a Note

- How can my hunger for things of the Spirit help me be more honest?

Create a Note

### **Honesty**

“Some may regard the quality of character known as honesty to be a most ordinary subject. But I believe it to be the very essence of the gospel. Without honesty, our lives ... will disintegrate into ugliness and chaos” (Gordon B. Hinckley, “We Believe in Being Honest,” *Ensign*, Oct. 1990, 2).

- What are the ways I have lied and attempted to hide my addiction from myself and others? How has this behavior caused “ugliness and chaos”?

Create a Note

### **Humility**

“Because ye are compelled to be humble blessed are ye; for a man sometimes, if he is compelled to be humble, seeketh repentance; and now surely, whosoever repenteth shall find mercy; and he that findeth mercy and endureth to the end the same shall be saved” (Alma 32:13).

- What circumstances have compelled me to be humble and repent?

Create a Note

- What hope does Alma offer me? How can I find or receive that hope?

Create a Note

### **Encompassed by temptations**

“I am encompassed about, because of the temptations and the sins which do so easily beset me.

“And when I desire to rejoice, my heart groaneth because of my sins; nevertheless, I know in whom I have trusted.

“My God hath been my support; he hath led me through mine afflictions in the wilderness; and he hath preserved me upon the waters of the great deep.

“He hath filled me with his love, even unto the consuming of my flesh” (2 Nephi 4:18–21).

- When Nephi felt overwhelmed, in whom did he place his trust?

Create a Note

- What can I do to place more trust in the Lord?

Create a Note

### **“I know that man is nothing”**

“It came to pass that it was for the space of many hours before Moses did again receive his natural strength like unto man; and he said unto himself: Now, for this cause I know that man is nothing, which thing I never had supposed” (Moses 1:10).

- In what ways am I nothing when I do not have the help of God?

Create a Note

- In what ways am I of infinite worth?

Create a Note

- How can recognizing my need to rely on God bring me to admit my own “nothingness” and become as a little child? (Mosiah 4:5; see also Mosiah 3:19).

Create a Note

Create a Note