

Step 8: Make a written list of all persons we have harmed and become willing to make restitution to them.

Key Principle: Prepare to Make Amends

Before our recovery began, our addictive lifestyles were like a tornado full of destructive energy that cut through our relationships, leaving much wreckage behind. As we worked on step 7, we felt the healing power of the Savior's mercy, and we felt eager to mend broken relationships. Step 8 is an opportunity to write a list of people and institutions we harmed and then make a plan to clean up and rebuild our relationships.

As we worked the steps of recovery, we found that one of the inspired things about the 12 steps is the order in which they are written. There is often a preparation step that comes before a step that requires great courage. Step 8, along with all the previous steps, is our preparation for step 9, which requires courage beyond our own.

We learned from people who had already worked step 8 that impulsively rushing to make amends without preparation can be as detrimental as not making amends at all. So we took time to pray; seek counsel from people we trust, like our sponsors or Church leaders; and make a plan. This preparation in step 8 prevented us from further harming our relationships when we began contacting people in step 9.

Write a list

Before we could rebuild relationships, we needed to identify and make a list of those relationships that were damaged. We used our inventories from step 4 to prepare our lists. As we prayerfully reviewed our inventories, the Spirit helped us identify the relationships we had harmed. Those of us who made a chart when we worked step 4 found it easier to identify these people and institutions (see the appendix for an example of a chart).

We found the following guidelines helpful as we made our lists. We asked ourselves, "Is there anyone in my life, past or present, who I feel embarrassed, uncomfortable, or ashamed around?" We wrote down their names, and we resisted the temptation to justify our feelings or excuse our negative actions toward them. We included people we meant to hurt and people we did not intend to hurt. We included people who had passed away and people we had no idea how to contact. We focused on these special cases when we worked step 9. As we worked step 8, we focused on being courageous in our honesty.

We tried not to leave out little things. We thought honestly about the harm we caused people as we indulged in our addictions, even if we were not aggressive toward them. We listed loved ones and friends we had harmed by being resentful, irresponsible, irritable, critical, impatient, dishonest, and dishonorable. If we added to another person's burdens in any way, we included these people on our lists. We tried to list everyone who was affected by the lies we

told, promises we broke, and ways we manipulated or used them. We thought of people we had not forgiven, and we added them to our lists as well.

After we listed everyone we harmed, we added one more name to the list—our own. When we indulged in our addictions, we harmed ourselves as well as others. The best way we can make amends to ourselves is to live in recovery from addiction. God can help us forgive ourselves and make amends. As we felt God’s love and forgiveness, our feelings of shame were replaced with a willingness to make amends.

Become willing

After we made our lists, we needed to become willing to make amends. Many of us found we could not list people and institutions we had harmed without being distracted by our resentment toward those who had harmed us too. People often get caught in terrible cycles of mutual resentment with each other. To break these cycles, someone has to be willing to forgive.

When we honestly confessed our negative feelings, God helped us break the cycle of resentment. He showed us that we need to forgive others just as He forgives us. In the parable of the man who was forgiven of all his debts but did not want to forgive others, his lord said to him, “I forgave thee all that debt, because thou desiredst me: Shouldest not thou also have ... compassion on thy fellowservant, even as I had pity on thee?” (Matthew 18:32–33).

As we struggled to become willing to make amends to people who had hurt us, we pleaded for Christ’s grace to help us extend to them the same mercy He gives to us. We took the Savior’s counsel to pray for their welfare and asked for them to receive all the blessings that we would want for ourselves (see Matthew 5:44).

As we worked through step 8, we tried to remember that this step is not an exercise in shaming anyone—either ourselves or others. Our experience has shown us that the Savior lifts the burdens of guilt and shame as we take an honest look at our troubled relationships and our part in them. In step 8, we began to relate to ourselves, others, and life with a new heart. We began to feel peace in our lives rather than contention and negativity.

We became willing to stop judging people unrighteously and taking inventory of their lives and faults. We became willing to stop minimizing our own negative behaviors or making excuses for them. By becoming willing to make amends, we felt the peace of knowing that Heavenly Father is pleased with our efforts. This step helped us take the actions that allow the Savior to set us free from our past mistakes. Becoming willing to make amends prepared us to work through step 9.

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.

Write a list of people we might have offended or harmed

Our sponsors guided us as we prepared our lists, and once more we found writing to be invaluable. Many of us used the following outline to help keep the process simple but concrete.

First, using our inventories from step 4, we listed the people or institutions we needed to contact.

Next to each entry, we gave a brief reason for needing to make amends.

Then, as guided by the Spirit, we made a plan to contact the people on our lists, whether in person, by telephone, or by letter or email. We reviewed our plans with our sponsors or trusted advisers.

Finally, we included a target date. We left a space to report the date we contacted the person and the results of the contact. (The chart in the appendix is a helpful tool.)

Forgive

It is hard to ask for forgiveness from people who have hurt us. If you find yourself struggling with this, you may find it helpful to first write a list of people you need to forgive; then write a list of people from whom you need to ask forgiveness. You may be surprised to find that some names appear on both lists.

We need to be patient with ourselves as we prayerfully work toward forgiving the people we listed. President James E. Faust said: “Most of us need time to work through pain and loss. We can find all manner of reasons for postponing forgiveness. One of these reasons is waiting for the wrongdoers to repent [and make amends to us] before we forgive them. Yet such a delay causes us to forfeit the peace and happiness that could be ours. The folly of rehashing long-past hurts does not bring happiness. ... If we can find forgiveness in our hearts for those who have caused us hurt and injury, we will rise to a higher level of self-esteem and well-being” (“The Healing Power of Forgiveness,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2007, 68).

Forgiving someone does not mean that we condone their poor choices or allow them to mistreat us. But forgiving does allow us to move forward spiritually, emotionally, and physically. Just as those who have harmed us are in bondage, our unwillingness to forgive them can hold us captive. As we forgive, we leave behind feelings that have the power to “canker, fester, and ultimately destroy” (Thomas S. Monson, “Hidden Wedges,” *Ensign*, May 2002, 20). Forgiving also helps us have the Spirit more abundantly and continue on the path of discipleship. As President Dieter F. Uchtdorf, then of the First Presidency, reminded us, “Heaven is filled with those who have this in common: They are forgiven. And they forgive” (“The Merciful Obtain Mercy,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2012, 77).

Pray for charity

Although you may be as terrified as we were to make amends, we testify that with the Savior’s help, you can become willing to meet the people on your list when the opportunity arises. We prepared to make amends by praying for the courage to live by faith in God, not by fear of

what people might do or say. And we tried to follow gospel principles rather than shame or fear. One of the powerful principles that helped us was charity, “the pure love of Christ” (Moroni 7:47).

Before working through step 8, many of us were surprised to feel Jesus Christ’s love despite all our imperfections. This love *from* Him caused us to feel great love *for* Him and gave us a desire to follow Him. As we tried our best to follow Him, we were filled with His love for ourselves and others. We prayed for charity, and over time we found ourselves more willing to forgive people and make amends. We also found a greater measure of love and forgiveness toward ourselves. We asked God to soften the hearts of the people on our lists with charity toward us, and we prayed for the strength to accept any outcome.

As we prayed for charity, many of us found it helpful to choose a person from our list and deliberately kneel and pray for that person each day for two weeks. Our lists of amends helped us be specific in our prayers to Heavenly Father about our unresolved feelings. As we prayed—even if it felt insincere at first—we were eventually blessed with miraculous compassion. Even in extreme situations, God has blessed people who have prayed for charity to forgive and make amends.

Study and Understanding

The following scriptures and statements from Church leaders can help in our recovery. We can use them for meditation, study, and journaling. We must remember to be honest and specific in our writing to gain the most benefit from it.

Peaceable followers of Christ

“I would speak unto you that are of the church, that are the peaceable followers of Christ, and that have obtained a sufficient hope by which ye can enter into the rest of the Lord, from this time henceforth until ye shall rest with him in heaven.

“And now my brethren, I judge these things of you because of your peaceable walk with the children of men” (Moroni 7:3–4).

In the first seven steps, we began a process of becoming peaceable followers of Christ. When we are at peace with Christ, we are better prepared to be at peace with others.

- How does working through the steps of recovery in order help me become a peaceable follower of Christ?

Create a Note

- What other actions do I need to take to be at peace with the people in my life?

Create a Note

God's perfect love

“There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love.

“We love [God], because he first loved us” (1 John 4:18–19).

- How can I trust in God's perfect love for me and for the person from whom I seek forgiveness?

Create a Note

- How can knowing that God loves me and all His children strengthen my resolve to make restitution whenever possible?

Create a Note

Reach out to others

“Judge not, and ye shall not be judged: condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned: forgive, and ye shall be forgiven:

“Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again” (Luke 6:37–38).

Even though we may fear that some people will reject our efforts to make peace with them, we should not let this fear keep us from putting them on our lists and preparing to contact them. The blessings we will receive are far greater than the pain.

“The nearer we get to our Heavenly Father, the more we are disposed to look with compassion on perishing souls—we feel that we want to take them upon our shoulders, and cast their sins behind our backs. ... If you would have God have mercy on you, have mercy on one another” (Joseph Smith, in History, 1838–1856 [Manuscript History of the Church], volume C-1 Addenda, 74, josephsmithpapers.org).

- We are all imperfect souls in need of Jesus Christ's mercy. How does it help to know that in working step 8, I am opening the door to receive Jesus Christ's mercy and grace?

Create a Note

Forgive and ask for forgiveness

“Then came Peter to him, and said, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times?”

“Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven” (Matthew 18:21–22).

It is easier to forgive and ask forgiveness for a single wrongdoing than it is to forgive or ask forgiveness for a long-standing situation filled with multiple offenses. Think about past or present relationships with long-standing situations you need to forgive or ask forgiveness for.

- How can I gain strength to forgive and ask for forgiveness?

Create a Note

- How is Jesus Christ the greatest example of forgiving other people? How can His example help me forgive other people?

Create a Note

“I say unto you, that ye ought to forgive one another; for he that forgiveth not his brother his trespasses standeth condemned before the Lord; for there remaineth in him the greater sin.

“I, the Lord, will forgive whom I will forgive, but of you it is required to forgive all men” (Doctrine and Covenants 64:9–10).

Jesus taught that not forgiving others is a greater sin than the original offense.

- How is refusing to forgive myself or someone else the equivalent of denying the Savior’s Atonement?

Create a Note

- How do resentment and bitterness damage me physically, emotionally, and spiritually?

Create a Note

Break the cycle of bitterness and offense

The Prophet Joseph Smith described how kindness can lead to repentance and forgiveness:

“Nothing is so much calculated to lead people to forsake sin, as to take them by the hand, and watch over them with tenderness. When persons manifest the least kindness and love to me, O what power it has over my mind, while the opposite course has a tendency to harrow up all the harsh feelings and depress the human mind” (Joseph Smith, in History, 1838–1856 [Manuscript of the Church], volume C-1 Addenda, 74, josephsmithpapers.org).

- Am I willing to be the one who breaks the cycle of bitterness and offense?

Create a Note

- How have people who have shown me kindness and love inspired or motivated me to act differently?

Create a Note

- In what ways might the troubled relationships in my life change as I treat other people with love and kindness?

Create a Note

Create a Note