

Step 9: Wherever possible, make direct restitution to all persons we have harmed.

Key Principle: Make Amends

As we moved on to step 9, we were ready to seek forgiveness. Like the repentant sons of Mosiah who went about “zealously striving to repair all the injuries which they had done” (Mosiah 27:35), we desired to make amends. Still, as we faced step 9, we knew we could not carry out our desires unless God blessed us with His Spirit. We needed courage, good judgment, sensitivity, prudence, and appropriate timing. Most of us did not possess these qualities at that time. We realized that step 9 would once more test our willingness to humble ourselves and seek the Lord’s help and grace.

Because of our experiences in this challenging process, we offer a few suggestions. It is very important that we are not impulsive or careless as we attempt to make amends. It is equally important that we do not procrastinate. Many people in recovery have relapsed when they allowed fear to keep them from making amends. We need to pray for the Lord’s guidance about when and how to make amends. In addition, it is helpful to speak with our sponsors, Church leaders, or others we trust.

Sometimes we may be tempted to avoid meeting with a person on our lists. However, we recommend that you resist this temptation, unless, of course, a legal restriction keeps you from meeting with someone. When we are humble and honest and make reasonable efforts to meet in person, we can repair damaged relationships. We let people know we are approaching them to make amends. We respect their wishes if they indicate they would rather not discuss the matter. If they give us the chance to apologize, we are brief and specific about the situation. We are careful not to make excuses or manipulate the people we approach. The purpose of making amends is not to justify our behaviors or to criticize people; the purpose is to admit our wrongs, apologize, and make restitution whenever possible. We do not argue with people, even if their response is not favorable or accepting. We humbly approach each person and offer reconciliation, not justification.

It may be particularly challenging to apologize for certain actions. For example, we may have to address matters that could have legal repercussions, such as theft or abuse. We may be tempted to overreact, make excuses, or avoid making amends. We prayerfully seek ecclesiastical or professional counsel before taking any action in these very serious cases.

In other cases, we may not be able to make amends directly. The person may have died, or we may not know where he or she lives. In such cases, we can still make amends indirectly. We can write a letter expressing our regret and our desire to reconcile, even if the letter cannot be delivered. We could find someone who reminds us of that person and do something to help him or her, or we can do something anonymously to help a member of the person’s family.

In some cases, we may have done harm that we cannot repair. Elder Neil L. Andersen taught:

“There are many wrongs that cannot be made right by the one who has hurt or offended, and there is pain and suffering that cannot be fully repaired. But never dismiss the generous restitution you can make, the suffering you can ease, even though love, purity, virtue, trust, and respect may be impossible to restore without the Lord’s intervention. ... For some sins, the only way to make restitution may come from blessing the lives of others and being an instrument in the Lord’s hands to bring his goodness and grace to others” (*The Divine Gift of Forgiveness* [2019], 218, 221).

From the moment we decide to adopt these true principles into our new way of life, we begin to make living amends. We amend the way we live, and as we live in recovery, it blesses everyone around us.

There may be situations where approaching another person to make amends would be painful for that person or even harmful. If you think that might be the case, discuss the situation with your sponsor or trusted adviser. This step of recovery should never cause further harm or distress to others.

After making amends for most of our past actions, there may still be one or two people we feel we cannot face. Many of us dealt with this reality. We recommend you turn to the Lord in honest prayer. If you still have fear or anger toward someone, you should probably postpone meeting with him or her. We can overcome negative feelings by praying for charity to see the person as the Lord sees him or her. We can look for positive reasons why restitution and reconciliation will help. If we do these things and are patient, the Lord can and will—in His own way and in His own time—give us the miraculous opportunity to seek forgiveness from everyone on our lists.

In some cases, the person will not or cannot forgive us. Other people may forgive us but do not want to reconcile or have a relationship with us. While this may be discouraging or painful for us, it’s important to respect their feelings and honor their agency. Step 9 is about doing our part to make amends. This step does not require the other person to forgive or reconcile with us. As we do our part in making an honest effort to make amends, we work step 9 and move forward in our journey of recovery.

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.

Approach others

In step 8, we made lists and prayerfully considered when and how to approach the people on our lists. We discussed our plans with our sponsors or trusted advisers, and then we were ready for step 9—to contact the people on our lists (if possible and appropriate). When we contact people to make amends, we do not have to go into great detail about our addictions.

But we should share enough detail to help them better understand why we need to speak with them.

We acknowledge our mistakes and ask what we can do to make things right. Whether or not they forgive us is up to them. The people we approach may have questions that are appropriate for us to answer. Remember to answer their questions in a way that will not further harm the relationship. If you have any doubts, simply tell them you would like to think about this more and will get back with them. You can then discuss with your sponsor or trusted adviser how and when to answer these questions.

We may sometimes become emotional during this process. We pray and ask for the Lord's help to remain calm and focused on the purpose of our visit. We may be tempted to justify or explain our actions by bringing up or focusing on something that someone else did, but we should resist this temptation. We need to remain focused on making amends for *our* actions.

We discuss what we can do to make restitution with the person we have wronged. For example, if we need to make restitution by paying money back, the person may forgive the debt, ask for the principal amount, or ask for interest. We may not need to meet their expectations; however, it's important to understand what the person feels we need to do to make restitution, and we should prayerfully consider it.

After making amends, we will complete the last two columns in the chart we created in step 4 (see the appendix for an example of a chart). We enter the date of each contact, the amends we made, and the results. Then we discuss the results with our sponsors. We recognize that we're striving to do all we can to be in harmony with the people on our lists. We've done our best to make things right, and we can trust the Lord to heal what we cannot heal. Peace comes through our relationship with the Lord. Other people have their agency to respond as they wish.

Recognize the blessings of recovery

As we gathered the courage to make amends, it was encouraging to inventory the blessings we received from working the steps to this point. We began to recognize that the blessings of recovery far exceeded our expectations. We recommend that you begin a list of the changes in your life. Here are some of the changes we noticed in ourselves as we came to this point in our recoveries:

- We feel God's perfect love for us.
- We feel new joy, happiness, and freedom in our lives.
- We understand people, relationships, and situations with a deeper perspective and have increased empathy toward others.
- We have a newfound direction and purpose for our lives.
- We feel deeper acceptance and love for ourselves and for others.
- We think less of ourselves and focus more on serving people who need our help.

- We feel the infinite Atonement of Jesus Christ more intensely and personally.
- We have more hope and faith for our eternal future.
- We have less fear about life and financial situations.
- We feel forgiven, and we can more readily forgive others.
- We trust that with God’s power, we can do things we cannot do by ourselves.

Create a Note

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.

Influence others for good

“The Spirit of the Lord doth say unto me: Command thy children to do good, lest they lead away the hearts of many people to destruction; therefore I command you, my son, in the fear of God, that ye refrain from your iniquities;

“That ye turn to the Lord with all your mind, might, and strength; that ye lead away the hearts of no more to do wickedly; but rather return unto them, and acknowledge your faults and that wrong which ye have done” (Alma 39:12–13).

One of the most harmful consequences of our addictive behaviors is that we may have influenced others to develop addictions themselves.

- Who in my life have I influenced this way?

Create a Note

- According to Alma’s teachings in these verses, where can I find courage to make amends to these people?

Create a Note

Be persuaded, not compelled

“Whosoever will come may come and partake of the waters of life freely; and whosoever will not come the same is not compelled to come; but in the last day it shall be restored unto him according to his deeds” (Alma 42:27).

There are many powerful reasons to work step 9, but we must never get caught up in the rationalization or lie that we have no choice. The Addiction Recovery Program is a program of persuasion, not compulsion.

- Do I feel persuaded or compelled to make amends?

Create a Note

- According to this verse, what are some reasons I may be persuaded?

Create a Note

Prepare to meet God

“I would that ye would come forth and harden not your hearts any longer; for behold, now is the time and the day of your salvation; and therefore, if ye will repent and harden not your hearts, immediately shall the great plan of redemption be brought about unto you.

“For behold, this life is the time for men to prepare to meet God; yea, behold the day of this life is the day for men to perform their labors” (Alma 34:31–32).

- What do I accomplish when I soften my heart and make amends?

Create a Note

- How does my willingness to make amends increase when I realize that I am also preparing to meet God?

Create a Note

Activity in the Church

“And [Alma the Younger and the sons of Mosiah] traveled throughout all the land, ... zealously striving to repair all the injuries which they had done to the church, confessing all their sins, and publishing all the things which they had seen, and explaining the prophecies and the scriptures to all who desired to hear them” (Mosiah 27:35).

Because of addictions, many people stop attending church. Some people use others’ faults to justify limited involvement in the Church.

- What has been my experience with activity in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints?

Create a Note

- How has coming closer to the Savior through recovery helped me feel reunited with His Church?

Create a Note

- How does being active in the Church help me make amends and recover more fully?

Create a Note

Willing restitution

“You must restore as far as possible all that which is stolen, damaged, or defiled. Willing restitution is concrete evidence to the Lord that you are committed to do all you can to repent” (Richard G. Scott, “Finding Forgiveness,” *Ensign*, May 1995, 76).

- How is making amends evidence not only to the Lord but also to myself and others that I am committed to a life of humility and honesty?

Create a Note

The intents of our hearts

“He that repents and does the commandments of the Lord shall be forgiven” (Doctrine and Covenants 1:32).

In making amends, we may face people who will not forgive us. Maybe their hearts are still hardened toward us, or perhaps they do not trust our intentions.

- How does it help to know that the Lord understands the true intent of my heart and that He will receive my offer to repent and make restitution, even if other people may not?

Create a Note

What the Savior can do for us

“Men cannot forgive their own sins; they cannot cleanse themselves from the consequences of their sins. Men can stop sinning and can do right in the future, and so far their acts are acceptable before the Lord and worthy of consideration. But who shall repair the wrongs they have done to themselves and to others, which it seems impossible for them to repair themselves? By the atonement of Jesus Christ, the sins of the repentant shall be washed away, though they be crimson they shall be made white as wool. This is the promise given to you” (Joseph F. Smith, in Conference Report, Oct. 1899, 41).

As you make amends, do not be discouraged by thoughts such as, “This is impossible! There’s no way I can adequately make up for the wrong I’ve done this person.” Although that may be

true, consider Jesus Christ's power to repair those things you cannot repair. We must trust that Jesus Christ will do what we cannot do.

- How can I show the Lord I trust Him? How can I increase that trust?

Create a Note

Create a Note