

10 thru 12 - The Maintenance Steps Part 1

The Miracle of The Twelve Step Process:

10 thru 12 - The Maintenance Steps Part 1

{xtypo_info} "The Twelve Step program of AA provides a practical program for accessing Spiritual power in dealing with day-to-day human life. A formula for integrating the Spiritual into the physical. Even though some of the steps, as originally written, contain shaming and abusive wording, the Twelve Step process and the ancient Spiritual principles underlining it are invaluable tools in helping the individual being start down, and stay on, a path aligned with Truth.."

Quote from Codependence: The Dance of Wounded Souls {/xtypo_info}

Steps 10 through 12 are known as the maintenance steps. In the AA Big Book it talks about the "daily maintenance" of our "spiritual condition." As I say in the quote from my book above, the 12 steps are a formula for integrating spirituality into day to day human life. These three steps are vital in working an ongoing spiritual program, an active and successful recovery program. They provide a practical program for dealing with life, for living life in the only way that really works - as a spiritual growth experience.

Here are Steps 10 through 12 as described in various versions of the 12 Steps:

The 12 Steps of Co-Dependents Anonymous

10. Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.

11. Sought through 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 co-dependents, and to practice these principles in all our affairs. (The only difference between AA & CoDa versions is AA uses His will in the 11th step instead of God's will.)

12 Steps for Kids

10. I keep on discovering more things about myself each day and if I hurt someone, I apologize.

11. When I am patient and pray, I get closer to my Higher Power, and that helps me know myself better.

12. By using these steps, I've become a new person. I don't have to feel alone anymore, and I can help others.

The 12 Steps to Recovery for Codependents

10. We continue to work our program, each day checking out our progress and asking for feedback from others in our attempt to recover and grow. We do this through support groups.

11. We seek through our own power and a Higher Power, awareness of our inner selves. We do this through reading, listening, meditation, sharing, and other ways of centering and getting in touch with our inner selves.

12. Having experienced the power of growing toward wholeness, we find our bodies, minds, and spirits awakened to a new sense of physical and emotional relief which leaves us open to a new awareness of Spirituality. We seek to explore our meaning in life by honest sharing with others, remember that BECOMING WHO WE ARE is a lifetime task which must be done one day at a time.

16 Steps for Discovery and Empowerment

10. We continue to trust our reality and daily affirm that we see what we see, we know what we know, and we feel what

we feel.

11. We promptly acknowledge our mistakes and make amends when appropriate, but we do not say we are sorry for things we have not done and we do not cover up, analyze, or take responsibility for the shortcomings of others.

12. We seek out situations, jobs, and people that affirm our intelligence, perceptions, and self-worth and avoid situations or people who are hurtful, harmful, or demeaning to us.

13. We take steps to heal our physical bodies, organize our lives, reduce stress, and have fun.

14. We seek to find our inward calling, and develop the will and wisdom to follow it.

15. We accept the ups and downs of life as natural events that can be used as lessons for growth.

16. We grow in awareness that we are interrelated with all living things, and we contribute to restoring peace and balance on the planet.

Consciousness and Discernment

The magic and the miracle of the twelve step recovery process is enhanced and magnified for anyone who can focus on learning conscious discernment. Working the 10th and 11th steps without understanding - or being in a conscious process of recovering from - codependency can give anyone's life more clarity and purpose, can help people stop addictive and compulsive behavior and find a way of living that is much more functional than they lived prior to 12 step recovery. It helps people start living life utilizing a tool box of ancient spiritual principles that work - that are functional in making life an easier more enjoyable experience.

People who are involved specifically in codependency / Adult Child syndrome recovery (in contrast to other twelve step programs) receive greater benefit because the focus of the work is more clearly upon cause rather than symptoms. However there are many recovering codependents and adult children who do not really understand the inner child healing process. The trap for them is the same as the trap for people in other twelve step programs - which is, that they try to change from the outside in. Any time we are trying to change from outside in, we inevitably get involved in trying to do recovery "right" because of the black and white dynamics of the disease.

When someone is working on healing the inner child wounds and consciously changing the subconscious programming, the benefits are greatly multiplied because the change starts to come from the inside out. Thus, as a person becomes more conscious about practicing discernment internally and externally, and starts learning to treat themselves in a more Loving manner, the core relationship with self shifts so that the external manifestations of having a more Loving relationship with self - i.e. setting boundaries, speaking our Truth, becoming healthier in our relationships, etc. - become more automatic and intuitive rather than a struggle to do the "right" things.

Consciousness and discernment - the wisdom to know the difference - are principles / tools / instruments / prescriptions which can elevate the tenth and eleventh step into become the doorway to reconnecting with Love, reconnecting with our Source. Doing the inner child healing work, developing internal boundaries to take Loving control of our own inner process, can allow a person to Truly relax and start enJoying life in the moment in a magnificent way. It can help people to access Joy and Love on a daily basis - and to have an inner peace and faith that allows them to be Truly Alive in a way that they had never imagined possible.

So, I will first discuss the 10th step in relationship to having integrity in our relationships with others, and the 11th step in regard to the process of accessing guidance in this article - which is Part 1 of the discussion of these maintenance steps. In Part 2 I will be discussing the 10th and 11th steps in tandem in relationship to how important it is to develop the wisdom to know the difference in relationship to our own inner process.

Working Step 10 - daily inventory

Step 10

10. Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it. (AA & CoDA)

10. I keep on discovering more things about myself each day and if I hurt someone, I apologize. (Kids)

11. We promptly acknowledge our mistakes and make amends when appropriate, but we do not say we are sorry for things we have not done and we do not cover up, analyze, or take responsibility for the shortcomings of others. (Discovery and Empowerment)

Step 10 - in relationship to basic twelve step recovery - is about being conscious enough to start taking responsibility for how we relate to other people. We need to pay attention to what is happening in our life so that we can maintain a level of self honesty in relationship to our own inner process - which is what will allow us to have integrity in our relationships with others.

"The principle behind the first step, and the foundation of the twelve step, or any Spiritual program, is self-honesty. If we are not being honest with ourselves, then we are not capable of being honest with anyone." - 1, 2, 3, and a 1, 2, 3 - The first three steps

It took me a couple of years in recovery to realize that I was actually supposed to admit I was "wrong" to other people. It had been a huge thing for me to start admitting it to myself. I was carrying so much shame that it was terribly painful to admit to myself that I had done something that I needed to make an amend for - let alone admitting it to someone else. Any time I realized I had done something "wrong," I would go into beating myself up unmercifully. I would be plunged into that dark abyss within me where I felt so full of shame, so hopelessly unworthy, so completely unlovable - I would savage myself for my defectiveness.

I had been so stuck in the black and white thinking of the disease, so beaten down by the right and wrong belief system I had been raised with - that I had to blame others in order to live with myself at all. My feelings of being defective were so powerful that I still have an angry reaction to the shaming wording the 12 steps of AA were written in. And I still feel sad that the people who started CoDA were so afraid of changing things that they left the shaming language in the CoDA version of the steps.

"I hate the term "defects of character." There could be no better term to describe toxic shame. That is what I felt most of my life - that I was somehow defective, that something was wrong with who I am.

I prefer to refer to these "defects" as codependent behavior patterns and dysfunctional attitudes. They are part of the emotional defense system which we adapted to protect ourselves as children. They are not signs that we are defective, nor are they "wrongs" as step 5 states - they are dysfunctional because they do not work to help us have a Loving, fulfilling relationship with ourselves. They are a part of the disease of codependence that we were powerless over as

long as we were unconscious to them. By starting to get conscious of these behavior patterns and attitudes we start to access the power to change them. That is what step 4 is Truly about - becoming conscious." - 4 thru 9 "The Clean Up Steps." - Step 4

So, we are not talking here about admitting we were "wrong" according to any arbitrary black and white values - we are talking about becoming conscious enough to recognize when we are reacting out of the old programming so that we can have the capacity to be honest with our self and others. One of the gifts of working a 12 step program is that it helps us start doing a paradigm shift in our relationship with self and life away from that black and white, right and wrong, perspective propagated by the polarized dysfunctional beliefs of the disease - wherein the only choices are I am right and you are wrong or you are right and I am wrong / either I am to blame or you are. The reality of life is that the black and white perspective is not the Truth - the reality of life takes place between the extremes.

It is learning how to live in the gray area that we are working on in recovery - learning to live in balance between the extremes. We want to see our self and life clearly enough to recognize when there is some responsibility on our side of the street - when something we did or said was causal in creating a situation. We also want to hold the other person responsible for their side of the street. It is very common when applying the tenth step in our life to make an amends for our part in an incident at the same time we set a boundary with another person in regard to their part.

We, of course, have no power to get them to own their part in causing some interaction disharmony.

"By starting to stop the dishonesty of believing that others are completely to blame, we can also stop empowering the lie that we are to blame because we are defective. By stopping the blaming, we can start taking responsibility - owning our side of the street.

A very important part of the process of taking responsibility is making amends. Cleaning up the wreckage of our past. Even though we were powerless over our behaviors because of our ego programming, because of our codependency, we still have to take responsibility for the behaviors and their consequences.

The purpose of making amends to others is to heal our Spirit, to clear our conscience, to dump any baggage from the past that we are still carrying. We do this for ourselves. Often the other person doesn't even remember an incident that we make amends for. Sometimes the other person is hateful and bitter still. We can still make amends for our side of the street, even if they are not owning their side of the street. We are not making the amends so that we can all make up and be friends - although that is certainly possible sometimes - we are making them to free us from the past, we are doing them as a Loving thing to do for our self. We do not have the power to get others to do what we want them to - so we need to focus on what we do have the power to change." - - The Miracle of The Twelve Step Recovery Process Part 1 - a formula for integration and balance

amends for "wrongs" ~ Healthy Guilt

I have been clean and sober since January 3rd, 1984. Both in writing I did in early January for my personal journal in the Joy2MeU Journal and in the sharing I did while celebrating my 20th sobriety birthday at a meeting in early January, I emphasized the importance of two things that I heard in my first few days of detox in the Treatment Center in which I got sober. Those two things radically changed my life and started me on the road to my codependency recovery - started me on a path to finding some freedom from the black and white thinking of the disease. One of them was a new concept to me - powerlessness. The second was a definition of insanity that was a reminder of something I already knew on some level but had never been able to apply to my own life because the toxic shame of codependency did not allow me to see my self with any clarity.

"The twelve step recovery application of the disease model in the treatment of alcoholism - the concept that I had been powerless over my past behaviors because I had a disease - helped me to take enough shame out of my perspective of myself to start seeing my life with a little bit of objectivity. The spiritual approach of the twelve step program - that there is a Power greater than myself that is on my side, The Force is with me - helped me to shift my intellectual paradigm enough to start to see life as something other than a test I could fail by doing it "wrong." The definition of insanity that I heard in my first days of recovery - doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results - caused me to start focusing on cause and effect.

It was the concept of powerlessness that led me to start becoming empowered to take responsibility for my life. Instead of viewing life through a perspective that was black and white - either I had to be perfect or I was shameful - I was able to start to see what my part had been in how painful and miserable my life experience had been. How I had some responsibility - how I was creating cause in my life that had negative consequences - but that it did not mean that there was something inherently wrong with me. I started seeing that my relationship with life was dysfunctional, was not working, and that I could take some action to change that relationship." - Codependency Recovery: Wounded Souls Dancing in the Light Book 2: A Dysfunctional Relationship with Life Chapter 3: Emotional honesty

The Truth in what I heard those first few days in recovery helped me to start detaching from my own internal process enough to start seeing cause and effect so that I could start the process of becoming a positive co-creator in my life instead of a negative one. So that I could stop allowing the unconscious reactions of my codependent defense system to dictate and define my life for me. The combination of being able to see myself from a perspective that was not totally black and white and shame based, and the dawning awareness that I had the power to make choices in my life that would change what I was creating in my life - "if you keep doing what you are doing, you will keep getting what you are getting" - is what allowed me to not pick up the next drink. I was able to stay sober one day at a time - often one moment at a time - and start taking responsibility for my life, for the things I do have some power to change.

It was vital for me to start becoming conscious of the fact that I had a choice to respond differently to life and other people / "change what I was doing", so that I could stop swinging between the extremes - overreact or underreact / blame them or blame me - that had dictated my life because of my powerlessness over the intellectual programming and emotional wounds of my childhood. As I started making some choices that were not self destructive and started working a twelve step recovery program I started to learn discernment - I started to become more conscious and empowered. That was when I started to grow up - started to learn how to stop allowing reactions out of my wounded inner children, or reactions to those reactions by the critical parent programming, to run my life.

Once I started becoming conscious enough to start separating my reactions out of emotional wounds and the old tapes / the toxic shame and fear programming of the disease of codependency, from what might be an appropriate response for

the adult I was in reality - then I could start practicing discernment in evaluating my behavior. I could start recognizing the difference between toxic shame about my being and guilt about my behavior. And eventually, in my codependency recovery, I could start discerning the difference between healthy guilt and unhealthy guilt.

"Healthy guilt is what we feel when we violate our own value system. It is an important intuitive component in maintaining a healthy, honest relationship with ourselves. Guilt helps us to be aware of areas that need some more healing - behavior that is a reaction to old wounds and old tapes. It is generated by our Spirit when we have acted in ways which we need to make amends for, when our humanness has caused us to act in a way that does not respect and honor that we are ONE with everyone and everything.

Unhealthy guilt is when we feel guilty for violating someone else's value system. We were programmed to react to life based on value systems that were dysfunctional, codependent, and unhealthy. We had imposed upon us, and programmed into our intellectual perspective and emotional reactions, value systems we learned from the emotional experiences, intellectual teachings, and role modeling of the beings around us in childhood. In order to survive, we adapted the value systems imposed upon us - even though they often did not make sense to us even then.

The critical parent voice developed in order to try to control our behavior and feelings using the same tools that were used on us - guilt, shame, and fear. As a result of that programming, it is normal for us to feel guilty about violating those value system. Thus in recovery when we start setting boundaries, saying no, speaking our truth, being emotionally honest, etc., feelings of guilt and shame are generated.

In recovery as we awaken to our power to make choices about our beliefs, we can start sorting out which values that we are holding resonate with Truth as we feel it intuitively - and which ones are a result of the old programming.

As we heal and awaken we get clearer on what our True values, the intuitive messages from our Spiritual Self, are - and can discern more often when we are experiencing unhealthy guilt so that we do not give it power.

The more we are able to develop our observer self, the witness who is viewing our life and internal process from a recovery perspective, the easier it becomes for us to discern between guilt feelings that are healthy - and an important tool in helping us maintain some emotional balance and responsibility - and the unhealthy guilt of our old programming that we can let go of.

In her wonderful daily meditation book, Melody Beattie calls the unhealthy guilt and shame generated when we start to change to new healthier behavior "afterburn," and talks about just letting it burn off without giving it power. This is what I refer to as having a boundary between emotional and mental. We can feel the guilt and recognize it as unhealthy so that we do not give the critical parent voice the power to get us into a frenzy of mental activity worrying if we have done something "wrong." We can talk to the child within us that is feeling guilty for setting a boundary and tell that child that it is good to set boundaries - that it is the Loving thing to do for ourselves. (Melody Beattie's *The Language of Letting Go* is an absolutely phenomenal book that I think everyone in recovery should have. The Loving Spiritual belief system that is the foundation for her practical recovery advice is one that aligns with what I believe better than anything else I have ever read.)" - Emotional Honesty and Emotional Responsibility part 5: Discernment in relationship to emotional honesty and responsibility 2

Often the ways in which we need to admit we are "wrong" in terms of working the tenth step - behavior that we feel some healthy guilt about - has to do with the ways in which we express ourselves. Frequently - especially when first learning

how to stop abuse and set boundaries - we will react to the other extreme and use harsh language or yell or some such behavior, in breaking out of our old behavior patterns. Then we may need to make an amend for the how we expressed our feelings - without denying our right to have the feelings. Thus I can apologize to someone for the way I expressed my feelings at the same time I am honoring the feelings by setting a boundary - telling the other person that the way they treated me was not acceptable, is not something I will tolerate.

"Sometimes in our growth we find ourselves lashing out and being abusive. When that happens we can make amends for how we expressed ourselves - we never have to apologize for having the feelings. We cannot go from repressing our feelings and being emotionally dishonest to communicating perfectly in one step. Communicating in an appropriate way is something we learn gradually - and something we will never do perfectly every time." - Emotional Honesty and Emotional Responsibility

This is a good example of behavior that falls in the gray area. I can apologize for overreacting when someone pushes one of my buttons / gouges one of my emotional wounds - at the same time I can set a boundary to let them know how I want to be treated.

(The Emotional Honesty and Emotional Responsibility series of articles just quoted are good ones to read to learn more about taking responsibility for your side of the street and setting boundaries. In part 5 of that series, quoted a few paragraphs earlier, I point out that sometimes we have to get down right rude in setting boundaries with certain types of codependents - and that we do not ever have to justify or explain setting a boundary unless we choose to. If the other person is reacting defensively, then they will try to turn an interaction where we are setting a boundary into an argument about who is right and who is wrong - who is to blame. Any argument that turns into a power struggle about who is to blame is codependent and a waste of time and energy - see Codependent Dysfunctional Relationships Dynamics - Part 1 Power Struggle. And since we are imperfect humans learning to be healthier, we will get into those kinds of arguments at times as the one who is being defensive. Then we can come back to the person and make an amend because we realized we were reacting defensively out of our wounds. We also need to sometimes make an amend not only for our emotional reaction, but also for the expectation / attitude we were holding that set us up for that reaction. I will be talking about this and some more of the dynamics of relating to other people in Part 2 of this topic.)

Another type of behavior that we may need to admit to - make amends for - is passive aggressive behavior. When we realize that we said or did something that was a reaction to anger we have been denying or suppressing.

"A person who does not have permission to own anger, is set up to be passive aggressive. The anger is not expressed directly. It is expressed indirectly, it comes out sideways.

"Passive-aggressive behavior is the expression of anger indirectly. This happens because we got the message one way or another in childhood that it was not OK to express anger. Since anger is energy that can not be completely repressed it gets expressed in indirect ways.

Passive-aggressive behavior can take the form of sarcasm, procrastination, chronic lateness, being a party pooper, constantly complaining, being negative, offering opinions and advice that is not asked for, being the martyr, slinging

arrows ("whatever have you done to your hair", "gained a little weight haven't we?"), etc. If we don't know how to set boundaries or will go along with anything to avoid conflict, then we often will agree to doing things we don't want to do - and as a result we will not be happy doing them and will get back at the other person somehow, someday because we are angry at them for "making" us do something we don't want to do." - Emotional abuse is Heart and Soul Mutilation

Anyone who does not have permission from their subconscious programming to own their anger, is set up to be emotionally dishonest with self and with other people." - Chapter 4: False Self Image

The ways in which we learned to express ourselves growing up are ingrained habits that we cannot break over night. Sarcasm and a very biting sense of humor were defenses I adapted growing up. I learned to use sarcasm as a one of my main tools for relating to people - especially to other men. My role models and peers taught me that sarcasm and profanity was the accepted behavior for a man in relating to other men. Instead of being able to say "I Love you" to another man, what one said is "Hey A-----." It took some effort, energy, and time to start breaking that habitual behavior.

Honesty - of a certain type, from some perspective - can be used as a defense also. When someone started getting too close I would sometimes "be honest" in telling a person something about them that would hurt them - and then say, "Hey, you wanted me to be honest." Sometimes I would wield honesty like a sword to get someone to back off, disguising it as an attempt at humor - and then say something like, "Hey, I was just kidding. Can't you take a joke." Sarcasm and other types of passive-aggressive "humor" form a major defense for some codependents.

And it was not just things that were hurtful that I could use to push someone away. There were times when I was just getting to know someone and would blurt out something mushy and inappropriate for the stage of learning to relate to each other we were in at the time. This would happen when the magical thinking child and romantic within me were getting all caught up in thinking my princess had arrived and I didn't have an internal boundary to stop myself from blurting out something inappropriate. I would think I was just being honest.

We have inner child places within us that want to jump into any potential relationship that comes along, and also inner child places that will try to sabotage any opportunity because of the anger we are carrying from our childhood - and from the repeating relationship patterns of our adult life that have caused us to repeat wounds of betrayal and rejection etc. Because some part of me feels a certain thing does not mean that it is the Truth for the whole of me / for the recovering adult me. Being honest out of an angry inner child who is terrified of taking any risks - or the magical thinking inner child - can sabotage a relationship. The younger naive, trusting, magical thinking child in concert with the romantic within and perhaps the maiden or the horndog (see The Inner Children that need Boundaries) may have caused us to jump into relationships where we got really hurt - so an older angry, cynical part of us developed to try to keep us from getting hurt. One extreme involves the desperately needy and lonely inner parts of us that want to open our hearts to any likely candidate for relationship, while the other extreme involve the parts of us that want to completely close our heart so that we never get hurt again.

The nature of codependency is that we are at war within our self. Different parts of us react in conflicting ways because of the defenses - the attitudes and perspectives that we adapted - due to the ways we were wounded in different stage of our growth and early life. In recovery we need to become more conscious of our own inner cause and effect so that we can learn to set internal boundaries that help us stop allowing wounded, or dysfunctionally programmed, parts of us to be our representative in interacting with others. When we react out of an emotional wound the critical parent programming then reacts to that emotional reaction by either beating us up for it, or working real hard to justify blaming the other person - one extreme makes us feel like a victim of self, the other like a victim of the other person. We want to stop reacting to the extremes and start learning how to respond out of the gray area in between one and ten - the two through

nine options.

Often when an inner child wound is triggered we express ourselves from a victim perspective through the shaming, critical perspective of our critical parent voice. In other words, we talk to the other person as harshly as we talk to ourselves. This can be very damaging in romantic relationships if we do not learn to be discerning in what we let come out of our mouth. Our damaged egos will try to get us to sabotage a relationship when it starts feeling too threateningly intimate, or if we are uncomfortable with being loved - or if we have set ourselves up to feel like a victim because we have not been able to set boundaries and speak our truth.

The sabotaging messages are reactions to / symptoms of underlying discomfort caused by our childhood wounds and it is vital to be able to discuss the cause of those reactions rather than just let the reactive thoughts pop out of our mouths. And again, this is not about doing it "right" - not about walking on egg shells - it is about being more conscious of what is going on within us so that we can start practicing discernment and learning how to not allow reactions out of either our wounded children or our critical parent voice to determine our responses. By becoming more conscious and discerning we can have a choice to respond with something other than one of the extremes of the disease. There are other choices between: underreacting and stuffing our feelings; and overreacting so that we lash out, so that we blurt out harmful, destructive words.

As an example, in the Joy2MeU Journal I have been telling the story of my recovery and spiritual growth - and specifically in a personal journal within the Journal I have been uncovering layers and levels of my wounding that were part of a very formidable fear of intimacy defense system. In one of the installments I talk about the first long term relationship I had in recovery - two years being long term for me because of the power of my fear of intimacy issues. In that relationship I learned to fight for the first time in a romantic relationship - that is I learned that it was possible to have a heated discussion in a relationship and work through the issues. Prior to that, my inner children felt like standing up for myself enough to fight would be the end of the relationship. In those disagreements we had, I was far enough into my codependency recovery to abide by "fair fight rules."

"Anyway, the point I wanted to make has to do with something I have heard referred to as fair fighting rules. The rule that I remember clearly, the one that the grief was connected to, is that no matter how heated an argument becomes, it is vital to not say the types of things that can't be taken back. The kind of soul wounding, mean, cruel statements about the other person's being or body or mind or whatever, that can never be forgotten. They can be forgiven perhaps, but never forgotten. They wound a relationship in a way that will linger for years and years - that may fatally damage a relationship.

All of us have those kind of statements come to our minds - what is important is to not let them out of our mouths. As I emphasize in different places in my writing, it is absolutely vital to get honest with our self, but that does not mean we have to tell another person everything. We need to use discernment in what we share because it is possible in our codependency to use a certain kind of honesty as a defense.

"Another important point I want to make about honest communication, is that this does not mean that you have to tell the other person every thought and feeling that you experience. We need to practice discernment in what we share. As human beings we have untold number of thoughts during the course of a day. Some of those thoughts will inevitably be about past loves, or negative thoughts in relationship to our significant other. In fact, the disease often produces those kinds of thought specifically for the purpose of sabotaging the relationship. So, we do not have to share everything. It is possible to use honesty as a defense: i.e. when someone gets too close or Loving we tell them something that pushes them away." - Healthy Romantic Relationships - part 8, Pay Attention and Communicate

In that two year relationship, where I learned to fight, I went by fair fighting rules. She did not. She would say very cruel, mean things. Her wounding was such that when she was in extreme reaction she would lash out - like the "mad dog" analogy I have been using in my online book. I was very glad that I had enough recovery to not allow myself to react in that way, even though she was. I was very sad that she was powerless over saying those kind of things." - The Path of one Recovering Codependent ~ the dance of one wounded soul My Unfolding Dance 16

It was possible for me to practice discernment and not say things I would later regret, even though I was being attacked in that way by my significant other. This is one of the gifts of conscious, discerning codependency recovery.

Working the tenth step, continuing "to take personal inventory" is a process of being conscious and paying attention. I needed to start getting more conscious of my own inner process so that I was not just automatically reacting out of old habits, out of old tapes, out of unconsciousness. Because I had been forced to disassociate from my own emotions in childhood, I had spent my life until recovery incapable of being consciously, honestly present in the moment. I had to start being present and paying attention to what I was doing, and what I was saying, before I could start changing the dysfunctional interaction patterns that were the effect of my codependent defenses.

Part of my codependent defense system was to judge other people - to take their inventory - in order to feel good about myself. When I first got into recovery and was only beginning to become conscious, I misinterpreted the emphasis on the twelve step phrase "rigorous honesty" to mean that I had to be honest in sharing with other people my inventory of them.

"We need to learn to be emotionally honest so that we can take responsibility for our feelings - not so that we can inflict them on others. When I first got into recovery, I mistook being rigorously honest in working my program with being vigorously honest in sharing with others my insights into their issues. It took me several years in recovery to realize that sharing my advice or opinions with others - without being asked - can be abusive." - Emotional Honesty and Emotional Responsibility part 4: Discernment in relationship to emotional honesty and responsibility 1

Once I started realizing that automatically sharing my advice or opinions without being asked could be abusive, it took me a long time to break the habit of just blurting out my thoughts. I did need to go back and make amends to people when I did it. It was actually very good practice in learning how to shut up and listen - and in learning how to talk to people instead of at people.

Learning to listen is vital: to raising our consciousness; to being honest with ourselves both intellectually and emotionally; to being available to relate to another person; to working our 10th and 11th steps. And it was impossible for me to truly learn to listen to - and hear - other people until I learned to listen to myself.

It was very important for me in early recovery to realize that the reason I needed to share in meetings was not so other people could learn from my wisdom (ego talking), but rather to check in with myself to see what was happening with me that day. We need to speak out loud - or write - to get in touch with our feelings. Thinking does not get emotional energy flowing. It is when we are talking or writing that feelings start bubbling up. I made a boundary with myself that if I was sitting in a meeting thinking I need to share for other people's benefit that I would shut up and listen. I shared when I felt compelled to share because something was going on emotionally with me - so that I could get clearer on what was going on with me. I would know there was something going on emotionally because I would not feel comfortable in my own skin. I would feel squirrely or anxious or jittery or not be able to sit still - and that would be the clue that I had some

emotional energy stirring within me. It was vital for me to start paying attention to my emotions as energy in my body. (My "shut up and listen" rule was in early recovery in large AA meetings - in later years in small CoDA meetings I would share even if I did not feel compelled to - and usually still learn something by listening to myself.)

It was sharing out loud in a meeting, or with another person/other people, that I could bring the emotions up to the surface to get in touch with them. It was also in listening to myself share that I could hear when I was just running an old tape from the past.

"In order to Truly listen it is necessary to be present - and the difficulty with being present is caused by unhealed emotional wounds. If we are not able to be emotionally honest with ourselves then it is impossible to be present and comfortable in our own skins in the moment. Obviously then, we are also incapable of being present with, and emotionally honest with, others.

. When we are present in our bodies in the moment and paying attention it is easy to discern if the other person is really talking to us - as opposed to talking at us, or telling a story. In the beginning of any relationship, people tell each other stories about their past - it is part of getting to know each other. What is important is to be able to be present while telling the story. That involves not just the other person but also ourselves.

Being present starts with being conscious of ourselves - it involves listening and paying attention to ourselves and our end of the communication. If I am listening to myself while telling someone a story about my past, I can catch myself when I get to a part of the story that I have creatively embellished over the years. As we learn and grow, our perspective of our past changes and it is very important to be able to listen to ourselves so that we can catch ourselves in places where we have exaggerated or rationalized something from our past. One of the important parts of the healing process is telling our story - and if we just regurgitate an old tape by rote we are not being present and paying attention.

If we have the capacity to be present with ourselves while telling our story, that means we also have the capacity to be present with the other person. I can be in the middle of telling a story and see in the other person's eyes that they aren't listening - which gives me the space to stop and ask what is going on. If I am not present enough to see the other person isn't listening then I am just talking at that person. And conversely, I will be able to recognize when that person is talking at me." - Healthy Romantic Relationships - part 2, Clear Communication is the foundation

Talking at another person is not a Loving thing to do - is not healthy communication. As we get conscious we can be more present and more aware, both of our self - of what is going on inside of us and what is coming out of our mouth - and in observing what is going on with the other person. Talking at another person is something that we sometimes have to make an amend for - as we learn to be more conscious and start recognizing when we have lapsed into unconsciousness in an interaction.

As I learned to be present and pay attention I would sometimes stop myself in the middle of sharing to call myself on an untruth that I had just heard come out of my mouth. I could then make an amend in the moment for not being honest. I once was speaking at an AA speakers meeting in Sedona Arizona and telling the story of a DUI I had received in the last stage of my alcoholic drinking. In the course of the story I heard myself say that there were 7 or 8 cop cars around my car when I came out of the black out I had been in. I stopped myself and said, "You know what, I just realized that the longer I am sober the more cop cars appear in this story. I really don't know how many there were, more than 2 any way."

It is so important to get honest with ourselves, to be present in our own skin, to start paying more attention to what we are saying and doing, so that we can have more integrity in our interactions with other people. Starting to learn to be more conscious of, and take responsibility for, our external behavior is an integral part of working a twelve step program. Unfortunately, for many of the people in some form of twelve step recovery - the people who are not focusing on codependency recovery from the inside out - this usually turns into a question of trying to do it "right" to avoid doing it "wrong." This happens because these people are codependent - and because they have not done the emotional healing that will allow them to be more conscious of, and capable of taking responsibility for, their own inner process. There are a lot of old timers in AA (and other 12 step programs) who will talk at people - who will regurgitate old tapes about the "right" way to do recovery.

Learning to be emotionally honest with our self is the key to codependency recovery. In order to do that we need to become more conscious of our own inner process - become discerning in our relationship with our own inner process. I am going to be discussing working the 10th and 11th steps in tandem in regard to discernment in relationship to our inner process and outer behavior in the next article in this series. Becoming more conscious and discerning is the key to making amends to ourselves - which is also what the the 10th step is about in the process of recovering from codependency.

Working Step 11 - Tuning into our Intuition

Step 11

11. Sought through 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. (CoDA - AA uses Him and His for the later two references to God)

11. When I am patient and pray, I get closer to my Higher Power, and that helps me know myself better. (Kids)

14. We seek to find our inward calling, and develop the will and wisdom to follow it. (Discovery and Empowerment)

There are two essential elements to this step. One is how to access guidance so that we can become empowered to change our lives. In the eleventh step the terminology used is through prayer and meditation we access knowledge and power. The second element has to do with spirituality - or as it is stated in the wording of this step God as we understood God - as well as the question of God's will for us.

As I state in my book, the twelve steps are revolutionary because at the heart of the concept is an idea that has been considered heresy in the Christian tradition that the founders of AA were coming out of - and which colored some of the language used in writing the twelve steps (such as the references in AA version to a masculine God.)

It is very ironic that many people resist the twelve steps because they think they are too Christian, when the concept at the heart of the steps is so revolutionary and counter to the twisted distorted version of Christianity that evolved in Western Civilization because it was used as a state religion to control the masses. I have often been amused in my years in recovery that many 12 step meetings are held in churches that would condemn the idea that an individual can determine their own personal concept of, and relationship to, God.

I am not going to directly discuss the "God as we understood God" aspect of the eleventh step in this article. In the next article I will be discussing how important a Loving spiritual belief system is to the "daily maintenance of our spiritual condition" - and I will be making references to my Spiritual beliefs in the rest of this article and the next. What I am going to do is include a section at the bottom of this page with links to articles about spirituality in general and my Spiritual beliefs in particular for anyone who wants to further explore this element of the 11th step.

I am going to focus on the process of accessing guidance in the rest of this article in relationship to what I believe "prayer and meditation" means.

prayer and meditation

The eleventh step is the key to making the twelve step process a program of empowerment. It is the eleventh step that tells us how to access power.

"When we start getting more honest with ourselves, the 11th step tells us how to access the power to change our lives - through prayer and meditation. Prayer and meditation not meaning, necessarily, formal practices but rather developing a conscious relationship, and ongoing communication, with our Spirit - with our intuitive guidance." - The Miracle of The Twelve Step Recovery Process

It was very important for me personally in early recovery to start seeing that prayer and meditation did not have to be

formal prayer and meditation. Most of the prayers I heard used were formal prayers to the patriarchal god that I had rejected because it had been such an abusive concept in my life. Even the Serenity Prayer started out with "God grant me the serenity . ." - as if it was something I had to beg and beseech God to give me. Formal meditation was something I just could not do "right" in my few attempts at doing it according to some kind of formal practice - and I beat myself up for that as another proof of my defectiveness.

Since my ego programming from childhood was to see life as a test I could fail, since I had been brainwashed to see life from a black and white perspective, I thought I was supposed to do prayer and meditation perfectly.

I was very confused in early recovery about how to do recovery "right" - and with the contradictions I was hearing in meetings. One of the most troubling of these to me were references to self and selfishness. I was told that self-seeking, self-pity, and self-will were bad and that selfishness and self-centeredness were the root of my problem. But then I would also hear, in a positive context that this was a selfish program and "to thine own self be true."

I was confused because I didn't understand how self and selfishness could be both good and bad. What I came to understand was that these were two completely differently levels of self. Ego-self is the part of me that was traumatized and programmed in childhood with dysfunctional beliefs about meaning and purpose of life. Spiritual Self is the part of me that I can start accessing when I start viewing life from a spiritual perspective.

"Someone in the meeting talked about how there were three steps that mentioned power. The first tells me that I don't have it; the second tells me where to find it; and the eleventh tells me how to access it - through prayer and meditation. . . .

What the Twelve Steps did for me was to help me start letting go of the ego-self's faulty programming. When I surrendered trying to control things out of ego-self and started looking to a Higher Power is when I started to access my Spiritual Self. My Spiritual Self is the part of me that knows that I am a Spiritual Being who is related to everyone and everything - that we are all ONE. Through my Spiritual Self I have access to all the power in the Universe.

So when I started praying and meditating I started to access the power to change my life. And it was very important for me personally to realize that prayer and meditation did not just mean formal prayer and formal meditation. What I came to realize is that prayer is "talking to" my Higher Power and other Recovering people, while meditation is "listening to" my Higher Power and other Recovering people. I learned to talk to and listen to my Higher Power all day long - to keep the energy flowing between the physical level and the Spiritual level - between my self and my Self." - Powerlessness & Empowerment

I later got in touch with a very good reason - which I mentioned in The Dance - for my inability to do formal mediation. And once I realized that there were different levels of self, I started to see that prayer was really about talking to a Higher Power of my own understanding. I came up with my own adapted version of the Serenity Prayer in which I ask my Higher Power to "help me access" serenity - something I explained in the first issue of my Journal on a page where I shared my daily prayers and affirmations.

"This first prayer is an adapted version of the Serenity Prayer. . . . Since we are all part of the God-Force it is denial of our True Self to ask God to grant us serenity or anything else for that matter - it is closer to the Truth in my belief to thank

the Powers That Be for helping me to remember who I AM and how to access the serenity and faith."

Once I started becoming conscious enough to both talk to, and listen to, a power greater than myself, then I started hearing messages coming from my intuition more clearly. Our intuition is our spirit / higher Self / soul/Soul sending us messages.

Our intuition has always told us the Truth. We were traumatized and programmed not to trust our intuition however. I can't tell you how many people have told me that they knew on their wedding day - or some such turning point in their life - that they were making a mistake, and when they leave the marriage 15 or 20 years later they are beating themselves up for not listening to their intuition. We were powerless to discern the difference between our intuition and the reactions from our childhood emotional wounds and subconscious programming until we started to learn to see our own internal process more clearly so that we could discern the difference between intuition and codependent reaction.

"One of the reasons that we have repeating behavior patterns is because we have not been capable of discerning between intuitive Truth and impulses arising out of our emotional wounds. It is very important to start learning how to tell the difference between an intuitive message from our spirit and a message that is being generated by the lonely inner child who wants to prove him/herself worthy by earning the love of an unavailable man/father, woman/mother. One of the things that I came to realize in my recovery was that if I met someone who felt like my soul mate, it was much, much more likely to be about an old wound than to be intuitive Truth.

Our intuition is right on. It has always been right on. We did not trust it because of the reflections and messages we got as children. It is real important to start discerning what is intuition and what is an old impulse in order to start trusting ourselves and the process - in order to start relaxing and enjoying life." - Inner child healing - the process of processing

Codependency recovery is not self help. It is a spiritual program that helps us access intuitive, spiritual guidance so that we can follow our own personal path through this human experience. It is no accident that when I adapted the talk I had been giving for several years into book form, the first topic I focused upon - after a couple of introductory paragraphs - was intuitive Truth.

Learning to tune into, and start trusting, our intuition is vital in recovery. Life is not a test in which we get to "happily ever after" if we do it "right" or punished if we do it "wrong." Life is a journey that only started making sense to me once I started seeing it as a spiritual growth process. There is nothing wrong with who I really am - with my True Self / Spiritual Self. It is my relationship with myself that got all screwed up in childhood. Codependency recovery is about healing our relationship with our self so that we can more clearly tune into our Self. Our intuition is the method of communication that our True Self / Higher Self / Spiritual Self uses to send us messages. It is how we access guidance from our Higher Power.

"On the Spiritual level of motivation, it is the emotional energy of Truth that provides my intuitive guidance. Truth - with a capital T - is a form of communication from my Soul to my being. It is something that I feel within - that resonates vibrationally in my consciousness. My consciousness exists throughout my body, and intuitive Truth resonates most often in my heart and / or my gut. It is kind of like one of those silent pagers that vibrates. That feeling in our gut, or our chest, is a page from the Universe letting us know that a message has just been delivered. The "aha", light bulb going on, moments of insight and clarity, are accompanied by a vibrational page in our physical / emotional being.

If we are conscious enough to pay attention, we can feel our pager go off and know the Universe is sending us a message. If we are indulging in our human propensity to go unconscious - which is exacerbated by the denial and emotional disassociation of the codependent defense system we were forced to adapt in childhood - then the Universe needs to use the stick, to get loud and intrusive, to get our attention. Neither way is shameful - but paying attention is a lot easier." - Joy2MeU Update Newsletter January 2002

By learning to listen to the vibrational pager within my being I was able to start changing my relationship with my self and life. By starting to escape from the black and white thinking of the disease I was able to awaken to concept of a Higher Power / God Force / Goddess Energy / Great Spirit whose will for me was / is: to learn to relax and enjoy my human life journey as an adventure while learning my lessons. Learning to tune into our intuitive guidance - the good vibrations (just heard that Beach Boys song yesterday;-) - is what allows us to change the quality of our lives dramatically.

I will talk in Part 2 of this discussion of 10 thru 12 - The Maintenance Steps about working these steps in our codependency recovery to become more conscious and discerning.

I published this page in February 2004 and then got caught up in personal processing in my Joy2MeU Journal about a relationship experience I was having and have never gotten back to finishing Part 2. I had a lot of it written already at that time, but will need to find the time and space to focus on finishing it - and hope to do that sometime in early 2009. - RB
1/9/09

God as we understood God

In my article Spirituality for Agnostics and Atheists I discuss the importance of being open to new perspectives - of how important it is to our relationship with self and life to be willing to consider expanded perspectives.

"But if we reject even looking at any alternative perspectives, then what we are empowering is ignorance. The person we hurt the most in doing this is our self." - Spirituality for Agnostics and Atheists

In the follow up article to that one, I discuss spiritual as a word / an adjective that describes our relationship with self and life.

"My own personal Spiritual belief system is one form of spirituality. It is certainly not the only one. Mine works for me very well in helping me to have a relationship with life that allows me to be happier today. It is not necessary for you to accept my belief system in order for you to use the tools, techniques, and perspectives that I have developed for emotional healing / codependence recovery / inner child integration." - The Recovery Process for inner child healing - spiritual integration

praying only for knowledge of God's will

In the 13th Chapter of my latest online book, I discuss how I learned to change the music of my dance of life from being dictated by the fear and shame programming of my damaged ego to being more aligned with the Love and Joy messages coming from my Higher Self.

"As long as our emotional truth - what we feel - is being dictated by childhood emotional wounds and the perspectives of self and life learned in childhood, then our relationship to this human dance will be dictated by music provided by our damaged ego self rather than the intuitive Truth that is coming from our Spiritual Self." - Codependency Recovery: Wounded Souls Dancing in the Light Book 2: A Dysfunctional Relationship with Life Chapter 13: Changing the Music: Love instead of fear and shame

In Chapter 14 I share a passage that I actually wrote for this series on the Twelve Steps back in March of 2002 - that I decided wasn't appropriate in this series. That passage then sparked the writing of the online book quoted - which delayed the writing of this article. In that chapter I discuss how important it was to be open to looking at any belief to discern the Truth in it without accepting twisted and distorted beliefs attached to it - how important it is to pick the baby out of the bath water.

"So now I share this message with you, the reader of this book, in the hopes that it will help you to remember the Truth of who you are, and why you are here. This information is not meant to be absolute or the final word - it is meant as an alternative perspective for you to consider. A Cosmic Perspective that just might help to make life an easier, more enjoyable experience for you.

It is certainly not necessary for you to agree with my beliefs - but please for the Love of Jesus (or Allah, or The Goddess, or Jehovah, or whatever name resonates for you as a representation of a Loving Higher Power) and for your self, question any belief you are carrying that is blocking you from opening up to Love." - Chapter 14: A Spiritual Manifesto