

Working Principles

Working the steps, applying the principles in our lives

Twelve step recovery is a blessed gift. Unfortunately not all twelve step groups are utilizing them to their full capacity. In Alcoholics Anonymous for instance, there are many people who are stuck in a black and white perspective that causes them to keep focusing on the symptom of drinking for many years after they have gotten sober. Of course, one of the reasons they do this is because they are scared of doing the emotional healing and facing the toxic shame - so they get stuck in a rigid black and white perspective.

This disease / condition of codependency is so powerful and insidious because the programming is so ingrained and so much a part of the human condition. The key to changing the conditions in the world is honesty and clarity.

The first three steps of the twelve step program basically involve: Step 1. getting honest enough to recognize that what we have been doing is not working; Step 2. getting willing to open up to some help from outside; Step 3. asking for help. The next step - the 4th - involves taking an honest inventory and starting to see ourselves with more clarity. 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.

In other words, life breaks us down enough to make us surrender - to make us start the process of stopping our ego programming from defining our life experience and dictating our relationships. Then we develop a level of consciousness that allows us to look at the gray area. We are then able to observe ourselves objectively enough to see that what we have been doing isn't working for us - and can start to be open to the possibility that maybe we are not shameful beings, but we have been living life by some dysfunctional programming. Once we start detaching from ego-self and developing a higher level of consciousness, we are directed back inward to seek the Truth. Prayer and meditation not meaning, necessarily, formal practices but rather developing a conscious relationship, and ongoing communication, with our Spirit - with our intuitive guidance.

We start to align our consciousness with Spiritual Self so that we can use our will power to change the negative programming and stop the self abusive behaviors that we adapted to protect ourselves. And as the 10th step dictates we need to keep taking a daily inventory - we need to be willing to stay open to messages from the Universe so that we can catch ourselves when we are being dishonest with ourselves.

Honesty with self is absolutely vital to recovery and healing - to raising our consciousness. As we start to awaken to Spiritual Truth, we can start to peel away the layers of dishonesty that we have wrapped ourselves in out of our codependent defense system. It is very painful to start getting honest with ourselves. We feel ashamed as we start to see how dishonest we have been.

The Truth shall set you free - but it will be a very painful process.

It is vital to face the pain of taking inventory of how we have been dishonest. What makes it possible to start to see ourselves, and our behavior patterns, more clearly is starting to believe that maybe we are not shameful. Maybe we do have a disease - a compulsively reactive condition - that we have been powerless over. Maybe there is a Loving Higher Power.

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. We can shine the Light of Love and consciousness into any dark corners within so that we can stop giving power to the past.

Making amends is about forgiveness. Healing the wounds from the past is the Loving thing to do for ourselves. Seeing more clearly so that we can own our responsibility in situations that we are still carrying resentments about, helps us to let go of those resentments. Carrying a resentment doesn't hurt the person we are resentful of - it hurts us.

I have found that the reason I had resentments that I couldn't let go of, was because I hadn't forgiven myself. I was holding onto feelings of self righteous indignation about how I was victimized, because I couldn't face the shame of admitting that I set myself up in some way. By trusting that person, or letting them into my life, or whatever.

Making amends for the ways in which our behavior has hurt others is part of the process of healing self. And making amends is much more than saying "I'm sorry." Making amends is about changing the dysfunctional behavior patterns. Making amends is about doing what it takes to stop empowering the dysfunctional attitudes and black and white thinking so that we can change the behaviors. It is about becoming willing to face the terror of healing our emotional wounds, so that we can stop reacting and hurting other people and our self with our behavior.

The steps help us to move into a growth paradigm - a relationship with life that helps us see problems as opportunities for growth instead of punishment. Applying the twelve step principles in our life helps us stop taking other people's behavior so personally - and learn to protect ourselves from their behavior if necessary. As we forgive ourselves for our past behaviors, and learn to see life and self with more clarity and more Love - we see others with more clarity and more Love.

By taking power away from the polarized thinking and the emotional wounds from the past we can stop being our own worst enemy.

{xtypo_info} "Because of our broken hearts, our emotional wounds, and our scrambled minds, our subconscious programming, what the disease of Codependence causes us to do is abandon ourselves. It causes the abandonment of self, the abandonment of our own inner child - and that inner child is the gateway to our channel to the Higher Self.

The one who betrayed us and abandoned and abused us the most was ourselves. That is how the emotional defense system that is Codependence works.

The battle cry of Codependence is "I'll show you - I'll get me." {/xtypo_info}

Quote from Codependence: The Dance of Wounded Souls

We need to learn to see the gray area. It is never just black and white, right and wrong. There are always multiple levels involved in this experience of being human. It is vital to stop empowering black and white thinking.

There is a simple prayer that sums up this process. It is a formula for learning how to live life in a healthy way. It, like the Twelve Step Recovery process and the US Constitution, is a Divinely inspired work of Mystical Truth. It is called the Serenity Prayer.

God,

Grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change,

The courage to change the things I can,

And the wisdom to know the difference.

(The Serenity Prayer is generally thought to have been written by Reinhold Niebuhr)

God / Goddess / Great Spirit, please help me to access:

the serenity to accept the things I cannot change (life, other people),

The courage and willingness to change the things I can (me, my own attitudes and behaviors),

And the wisdom and clarity to know the difference.

(My personal adapted version of Serenity Prayer)

(Above excerpts are from Chapter 2 of Attack on America - A Spiritual Healing Perspective)