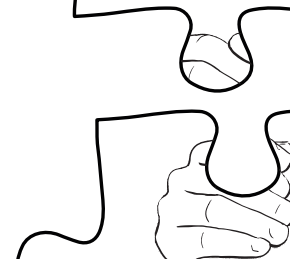
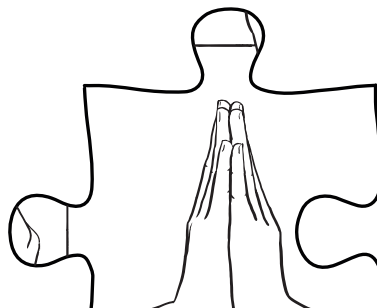
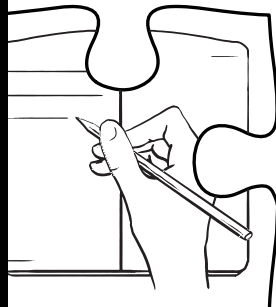
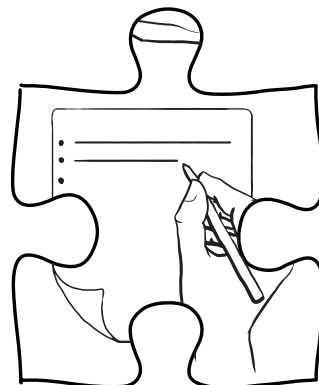
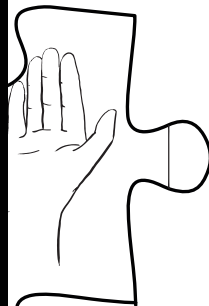
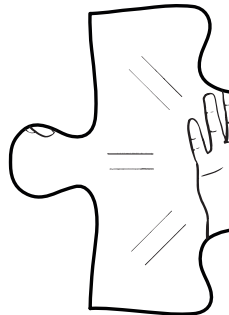
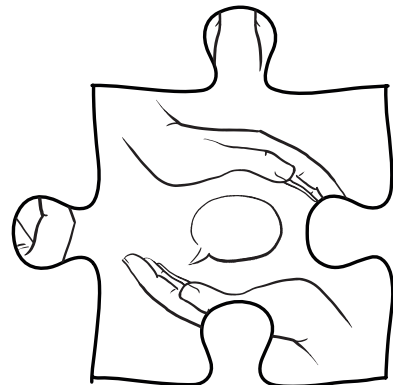
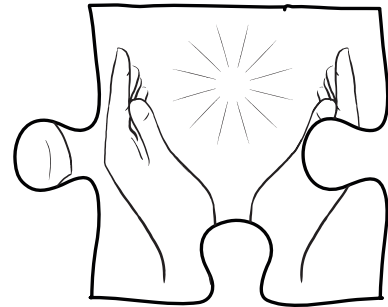


EXODUS STEPWORK PROGRAMME

STEP ONE

“We admitted that we were powerless over our addiction, and that our lives had become unmanageable.”



“We admitted that we were powerless over our addiction, and that our lives had become unmanageable.”

Working Step 1 is an opportunity to escape the darkness and dysfunction that we have been living in and begin a journey of restoration in recovery.

The first step in any recovery journey is taken when we begin to **see the light**, or, in other words, when we **stop deceiving ourselves** and begin to **see our circumstances as they truly are**.

We cannot fix what we do not first acknowledge. This is why, in the first Step, we intentionally **face up to reality**. As we do so, we realise the **significant harm that addiction has caused** in our own lives and in the lives of others (i.e., **our unmanageability**). We also come to recognise the **extent to which we are unable to control our using** (i.e., **our powerlessness**).

The hope is that, in acknowledging such truths, we also come to **authentically accept our desperate need for personal change**. This place, in which the pain of staying the same becomes greater than the pain of change, **lays the foundation for working the rest of the 12 Step Programme**.

Metaphorically, Step 1 can be **likened to the raising of a white flag**. In battle situations, a white flag is a **universal sign of surrender** that is raised when a side **concedes defeat**, i.e., admits that they have lost the fight. Rather than fight on to certain death, a conceding side **surrenders the battle to preserve the lives** of those in its ranks.

In Step 1, we too surrender. We **admit that we are defeated** and that, on our own, we are **unable to control or manage our addiction**. However, in **conceding defeat, we avoid the destruction that would certainly ensue** should we continue to exist as we have been. **Instead, we choose to live**.

The **paradox of Step 1** is that of **surrendering to win**. In humbly embracing our powerlessness, we are, in fact, empowered and liberated by the truth. In admitting our unmanageability, we take the first step in bringing our lives back into order.



I want to do what is right, but I can't. I want to do what is good, but I don't. I don't want to do what is wrong, but I do it anyway.
Romans 7:19



You yourselves used to be in the darkness, but since you have become the Lord's people, you are in the light.
Ephesians 5:8



Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that He may lift you up in due time.
1 Peter 5:6

- What has led you to begin this 12 Step journey?

- How do you feel about starting Step 1?

- How could you benefit from working Step 1?

WE ADMITTED

When we admit to something, we confess it to be true. In Step 1, we are, thus, called to **confess the truth about our powerlessness (loss of control) and unmanageability (the harm that has been caused)**.

This is often easier said than done.

Although our addiction has caused us nothing but trouble, it can be **difficult to let go of what we have become accustomed to** and to **trust new processes** with which we are unacquainted.

Additionally, addiction is a **disorder that is sustained by dishonesty and many different manifestations of self-deception, i.e., denial**. Truly acknowledging our powerlessness and unmanageability in Step 1 requires not only **brutal honesty** but also the willingness to **consider and dismantle entrenched internal denial mechanisms** that have long sustained our addictive cycles.

- What role has dishonesty played in your addiction?

- How have you minimised or covered up your addiction?

- Step 1 requires us to be totally honest and transparent about our addiction. Make a commitment here to be completely truthful in your responses, even when it may be uncomfortable to do so.

Psychologically, **denial is a form of repression that is known as a defence mechanism**. The aim of denial is to shelter us from experiencing distress. The mechanism functions by mentally **rejecting uncomfortable realities** that, if acknowledged, would be deeply perturbing and difficult to cope with. The **result is disbelief in the truth of a situation or circumstance**, despite ample objective evidence to the contrary.

The problem with denial is that, in rejecting disturbing realities, **we can become blinded to the damage that a behaviour or circumstance is causing**. In other words, denial can **prevent us from seeing our own powerlessness and unmanageability**. As a result, we **don't see the need for change**, nor are we motivated to pursue it.

What makes denial especially tricky is that it is an **involuntary process** that operates **outside of our immediate awareness**. The subconsciousness of denial means that **when we are in denial, we don't know that we are**. Also, denial is **not always straightforward or absolute**.

The self-deception that we use to justify our addiction comes in many **different forms** and can exist in **varying degrees**.

- Which of the following forms of self-deception do you relate to? Select those that apply and underline any statements that are similar to statements you have used to justify your using.
 - Simple Denial:** Completely denying the existence of a problem despite all evidence to the contrary. For example, “I’m not addicted,” or “I don’t have a problem.”
 - Minimising:** Realising a problem but denying its severity. For example, “I have a problem but it’s not that serious,” or, “I have a problem but it’s okay because I’m not harming anyone except myself.”
 - Control Fallacy:** Overestimating the level of control that exists in relation to a behaviour. For example, “I have a problem but I don’t need help to manage it,” or, “All I have to do to get my problem under control is ...”
 - Rationalising:** Justifying the problem through reassuring but nonsensical explanations and excuses for behaviour. For example, “My drug of choice helps me to manage my anxiety,” or, “I’m entitled to behave this way after everything I’ve been through.”
 - Blame-shifting:** Recognising a problem but not taking personal responsibility for it; excusing behaviour as a situational response or someone else’s fault. For example, “I use pornography because I am not sexually satisfied in my marriage,” or, “I use to deal with the trauma that I experienced in childhood.”
 - Compartmentalising:** Separating life into disjointed public and private compartments with incongruent standards for each. For example, “Watching pornography is something that I do but it’s not a reflection of who I really am,” or, “Telling my loved ones about my gambling problem would cause them more harm than good.”
 - Comparing:** Concluding that a problem is not that serious because of how it compares to the problems of others. For example, “I can’t be addicted because I haven’t lost everything,” or, “It’s not a problem because lots of other people are doing it.”
 - Optimism Bias:** Believing that situations will always work out and that negative consequences will never come to fruition. For example, “I know I’ve lost a lot of money but I’ll make it back soon,” or, “This is just a phase, it will blow over soon.”
- Describe the role that denial has played in sustaining your addiction.

- What, in the past, have you told yourself to make using acceptable?

- How has denial prevented you from acknowledging your powerlessness and unmanageability?

THAT WE WERE POWERLESS OVER OUR ADDICTION

We can dismantle denial mechanisms by **considering, and drawing realistic conclusions from, the objective evidence that exists** in relation to our powerlessness and unmanageability.

When we are powerless over our addiction, we have **lost control over using**. Very simply, what this means is that **when we start, we can't stop**. Powerlessness means that when we start using, **we generally end up using far more, for far longer, and in far greater intensity, than we originally intended to**. Efforts to manage or contain our using ultimately fail.

Intertwined with powerlessness are the concepts of **obsession and compulsion**. Obsession refers to a **constant preoccupation** with the object of our using, i.e., our drug/s or behaviour/s of choice. When we are constantly preoccupied with our addiction, using becomes our **predominant focus and concern**, to the extent that other areas of our lives go neglected.

Compulsion refers to **automatic acting out**, even when we know that we shouldn't or hadn't intended to.

- How much time and energy has been taken up with your addiction (using, thinking about using, hiding using, and finding ways and means to use)? Estimate the number of preoccupied hours over the last month/the last month of using.

- How do you relate to compulsion?

- How often have you used for longer periods or in greater quantities than you originally intended?

- Describe one of the last occasions that you used. Begin with the morning of the day that you **picked up** and track the using event through to its conclusion. Include any boundaries or limitations that you set for yourself prior to using, e.g., “I’ll just have a couple of beers,” and how well you were able to stick to those conditions. Explain how the using event ended and note the consequences of your using.

- Repeat the above process in relation to five other using events.

1.

2.

3.

4.

5. _____

- What do these stories demonstrate about your ability to control your using?

- What can be concluded about your powerlessness over your addiction?

- How does acknowledging your powerlessness over your addiction impact your recovery?

THAT OUR LIVES HAD BECOME UNMANAGEABLE

Unmanageability is the **external evidence of powerlessness**. It refers to the **negative consequences and chaos** (i.e., the fall-out) caused by addictive behavioural patterns.

There are two types of unmanageability: **outward unmanageability** and **inner, or personal, unmanageability**.

a) Outward Unmanageability

Outward unmanageability is often identified by **measurable, external consequences**, such as physical deterioration, debt, divorce, job loss, accidents, immorality, arrest, or institutionalisation.

ACTIVITY: CONSEQUENCES INVENTORY

Select the consequences that you have experienced as a result of your addiction.

- Failed efforts to control using
- Failure to meet obligations and responsibilities
- Damage to relationships with significant others
- Changes to core beliefs and values
- Emotional instability
- Mental health issues (depression, anxiety)
- Changes in personality
- Loss of touch with reality (psychosis, paranoia)
- Sleep disturbances
- Physical exhaustion
- Lack of self-care
- Deterioration in physical appearance
- Health problems
- Accidents and injuries
- Frequent absenteeism at work or school
- Decline in performance at work or school
- Job loss or suspension/expulsion at school
- Isolation and loneliness
- Eviction from place of residence
- Involvement in abusive relationships
- Involvement in dangerous situations
- Hurt or harm to others
- Anger, aggression and/or violence
- Dishonesty, duplicity and deceit
- Criminal activity (theft, fraud, assault etc.)
- Arrests
- Criminal charges
- Incarceration (prison time)
- Institutionalisation (psychiatric or rehabilitation)
- Hospitalisation
- Loss of income
- Loss of personal possessions
- Financial distress
- Debt
- Poverty
- Homelessness
- Overdose
- Withdrawals
- Suicide attempts
- Estrangement
- Divorce or separation
- Custody challenges
- Shame
- Regret and remorse
- Low self-worth
- Lack of purpose
- Lack of self-respect
- Damage to reputation and credibility
- Threats to safety
- Spiritual disconnection

- How has your addiction impacted your . . .

Physical wellbeing?

Mental health?

Family members?

Social life?

Other significant relationships?

Finances?

Employment or studies?

Morals and values?

Reputation?

- What do these effects demonstrate about your outward unmanageability?

b) Inner Unmanageability

One of the most obvious ways by which we can identify inner unmanageability is **emotional instability or lability**. We may overreact or underreact to events in our lives, experience a roller coaster of up and down feelings, or be unable to effectively regulate intense emotions.

Inner unmanageability is also evident in our **spiritual lives** and in **untrue belief systems** about ourselves, the world that we live in, and the people in our lives.

We may believe that we're worthless, or that the responsibilities of life are just too large a burden for us to bear. We may believe that we need to use to cope, to fill the emptiness inside, or to escape the shame that we feel.

- How do you relate to emotional instability?



For although they knew God, they neither glorified Him as God nor gave thanks to Him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened.

Romans 1:21

- How does your personality change when you are using?

- How does your mood change when you are using?

- How do you react when you are prevented from using?

- Which emotions have you attempted to escape through using?

- What flawed beliefs can you identify as having enabled your addiction?

- Describe your spiritual life in addiction.

- What do your responses demonstrate about your inward unmanageability?

Addiction is a **progressive disorder**. This means that over time, and as we develop tolerance, we need more and more of our drug/s or behaviour/s of choice to achieve a desired result. Increased use leads to **increased unmanageability** in our lives.

- How has your addiction progressed (worsened/escalated) over time?

- How does acknowledging your unmanageability in addiction impact your recovery?

ONWARDS AND UPWARDS

In Step 1, it is extremely important that we **internalise and come to a firm conclusion about our powerlessness and unmanageability**.

Lack of conviction around our own powerlessness can cause us to **revert to flawed beliefs** about being able to manage our addiction on our own or to **use in moderation**, without losing control. Such beliefs are a **common cause of relapse**.

An **unrealistic grasp of unmanageability** is also problematic, as this can **dampen our desperation for change and hinder motivation in recovery**.

- Do you have any reservations about Step 1? Reservations are doubts/things that we are not willing to admit to or to do.

- How might you overcome these reservations?

- Are you convinced that you are powerless over your addiction?

- Are you convinced that your life has become unmanageable as a direct result of your addiction?

Once we have **truly accepted and admitted** our powerlessness and unmanageability, then we are **ready to move on to Step 2**.

- What have been your most significant realisations in Step 1?

- What is your personal prayer at this stage?

STEP 1 PRAYER

- How could you apply the principles of Step 1 to help you **throughout** your recovery journey?

- Are you ready to move on to Step 2?

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