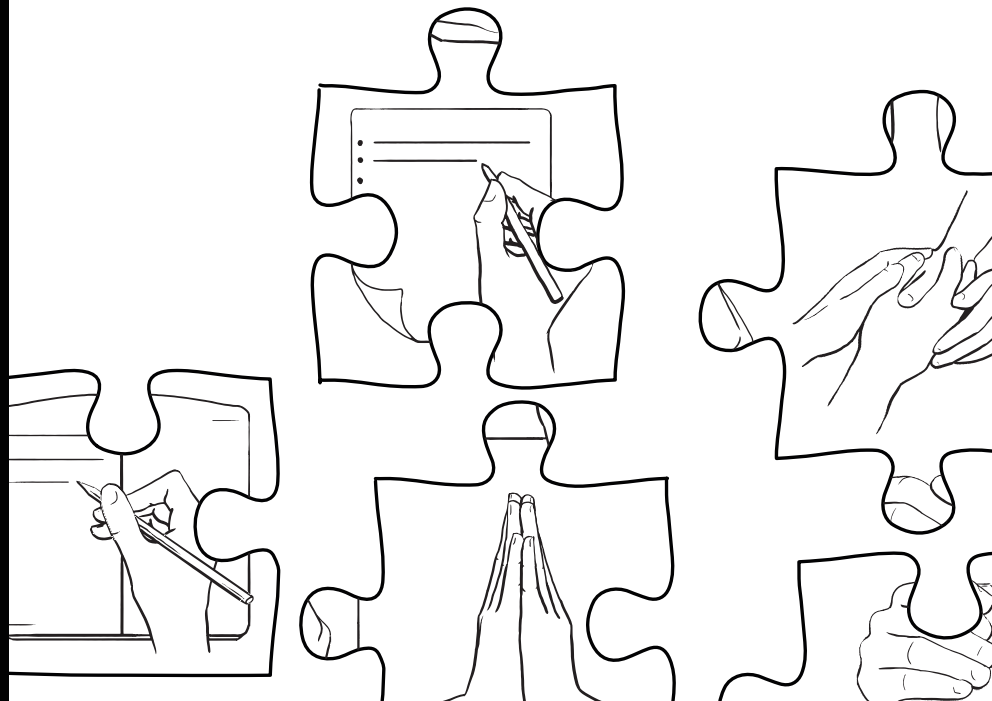
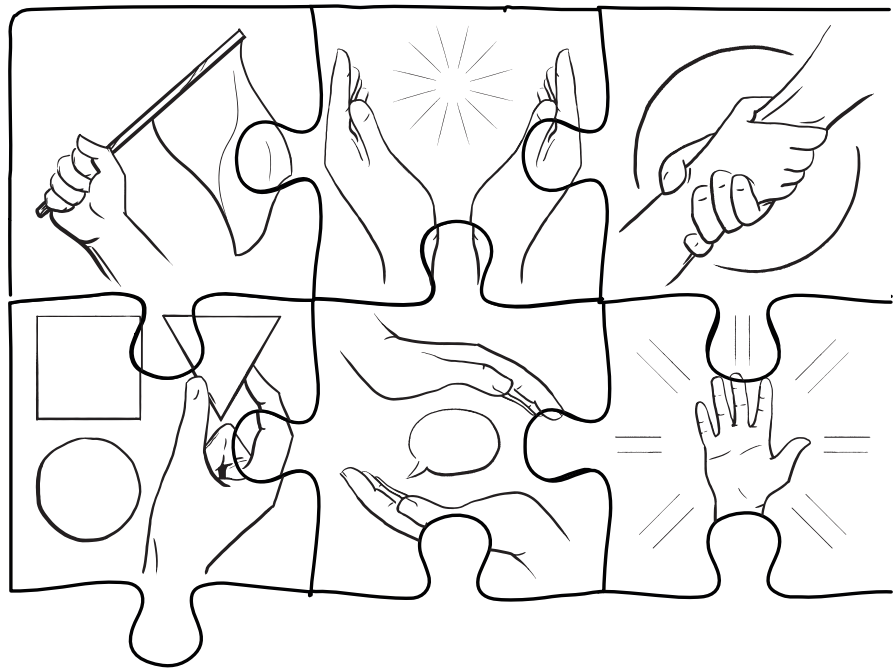
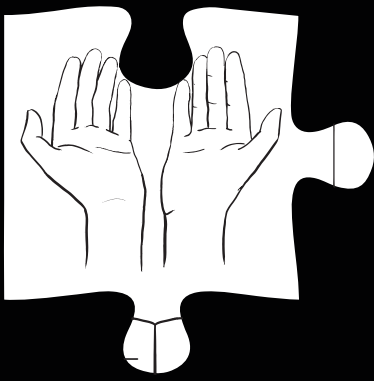


EXODUS STEPWORK PROGRAMME

STEP SEVEN

“We humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.”



“We humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.”

INTENTION TO ACTION

In Step 6, we became comfortable with the idea that we have **shortcomings**, or **defects of character**, that we would be better off without. We wrote down our **flaws and self-defeating patterns** and **readied ourselves to let go** of them. We **worked on becoming willing** to live in a completely different way as a **new creation**.

In Step 7, we build on the **willingness and surrender** that we developed in Step 6, turning **intention into action** by physically asking **God to reshape us**. In relation to our journey through the 12 Steps so far, this Step is unique. Previous steps have involved us working on our inner selves. Step 7 **begins the process of behavioural transformation**.

Especially meaningful and relevant in Step 7 are the words of **John 15:2**, which speak of the **pruning** of God.

In gardening, pruning is the practice of selectively **removing parts** of a tree, bush, or plant **to allow for new growth**. Pruning is also used to **direct the growth** of a plant into a particular form. Although removing parts may, at first, seem to be counter-productive, pruning is in fact an **invigorating process** that increases light penetration, enhances water and nutrient uptake, and **stimulates a surge of healthy regrowth**. In fruiting plants, pruning not only **increases the quantity of fruit** that is produced but also **improves the fruits' quality**.

In the same way that a gardener would his plants, **God sometimes prunes us**, cutting back aspects of our character and behaviour to **encourage personal growth and development**. Although the process can be challenging, uncomfortable, and even painful at times, God's pruning is always applied with **our best interests at heart**.

In Step 7, we ask **God to tend to us in this way** with the understanding that His pruning is, in fact, a **gift that removes our character defects and replaces them with character strengths**. His pruning makes us **more fruitful as individuals** and helps us to come into **alignment with His purposes** for our lives.

To properly work Step 7, we must have a **true and authentic desire to be changed**. So, we start this Step by ensuring that **we have no reservations about the process**.



If you remain in Me and My words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.
This is to My Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be My disciples.

John 15:7-8



Every branch in Me that does not produce fruit He removes, and He prunes every branch that produces fruit so that it will produce more fruit.

John 15:2



But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.

Galatians 5:22-23

- How sincere is your current desire for change?

- What are your reasons for desiring change?

- What could you gain through the Step 7 process?

- Do you have any reservations about having your shortcomings removed? If so, what are they?

- What could you do to resolve your reservations?

HUMBLY

In Step 7, the **principle of humility** is key. Often misunderstood to be synonymous with weakness and low self-worth, humility is in fact **an asset and a strength that helps us to mature** into the best versions of ourselves. The Bible is full of wisdom about the **virtue of a humble, teachable spirit**.

When we have humility, we have a realistic understanding of not only our strengths but also our weaknesses. When we have humility, we are **self-aware**. We **acknowledge that we have imperfections and inadequacies**. We are **not afraid to be vulnerable**. We try our best to live **free of pride, arrogance, and self-sufficiency**. This characteristic is **essential when it comes to asking for and accepting help**. Before we can bring ourselves to ask for help, we must come to a point of **owning our limitations**. Thus, humility is an **inseparable part of surrender in the Step 7 process**.

Humbleness is also a **critical starting state for growth**. A humble disposition positions us in a **place from which we can improve and develop with support** and in which we can reap the **opportunities for positive change** that the recovery journey provides.

By contrast, when we **lack humility**, we are often **blinded to our shortcomings** and **resistant to any form of assistance**. We don't ask for help because we don't think that we need it. This leaves us in a **stagnant, unsurrendered space** that does not allow for much personal development.

- How have you grown in humility in your journey so far through the 12 Steps?

- How does humility help you in working Step 7?



For all those who exalt themselves will be humbled and those who humble themselves will be exalted.
Luke 14:11

- How can you continue to practice humility in recovery?

- What mental, emotional, and behavioural signs might indicate that you are experiencing a lack of humility?

ASKED HIM

In Step 7, we return once again to the **basic principles of Step 2 and Step 3**, remembering that we are better off when we hand over the care of our lives to God. Just like plants that cannot prune themselves, **we require assistance** when it comes to having our shortcomings removed in a way that promotes growth.

In our own strength, we cannot **restore ourselves to sanity**. **Only God has the power to do this**. Only He can truly **transform us**, i.e., renew our hearts and minds as far as the east is from the west.

This is why in Step 7, we do not set out to eliminate our character defects on our own steam. Instead, we **petition God** to begin the pruning process, **trusting** that He will come through for us. We can do this **with confidence and in faith** because of God's reassurances found in His Word. Many times, God reminds us that **He hears our prayers**. Many times, God tells us that **He blesses the humble**. Many times, God confirms that **He loves us** and that **He will transform and restore** our lives, when we follow Him.



Search me, oh God
and know my heart;
test me and know my
anxious thoughts. Point
out anything in me that
offends you, and lead
me along the path of
everlasting life.

Psalms 139:23-24

TO REMOVE OUR SHORTCOMINGS

Asking God to remove our shortcomings is a request that we will probably make on many occasions during our lifetimes. Having our shortcomings removed is **not a one-time event**. It is a process that **takes time**. Expecting God to eliminate all our issues at once only sets us up for disappointment and doubt. In addition to humility and faith, we will need to **practice patience** in the outworking of Step 7.

What gardeners know is that the optimal time for pruning varies amongst different plant species. Plants need to be pruned at a time that complements their growth characteristics and flowering cycles. In the same way, **God knows our optimal times for pruning**. Even if it has been a long time since asking for the removal of a shortcoming, we must not lose faith. God's timing is perfect, and His ways are beyond our human understanding.

Critically, we must also always remain mindful of **how God works – in a multitude of different and mysterious ways**. Of course, **supernatural breakthroughs** are always a possibility. Sometimes, our shortcomings miraculously disappear as we experience an **inexplicable 180 degree shift**.

It is common, though, for God to use **other means** to remove our character defects that **require some work from us**. Here, **God uses situations and experiences to provide us with opportunities to do things in a new way**. Often these opportunities take us **out of our comfort zones** in the form of challenges or obstacles to overcome. As we deal with challenges and obstacles **differently from how we have in the past**, we rise above and ultimately **out grow** our old patterns.

In such scenarios, outgrowing our shortcomings **depends on how we respond** to the opportunities that God provides. However, **He is always faithful**. When we ask Him, God gives us the **courage and resolve to do what we are unaccustomed to and to follow through with what is required of us to change**.

For example, if isolation is a shortcoming, God may present us with the opportunity to join a recovery group. Whether our isolation is removed depends on how much effort we make to integrate into the recovery community. At the same time, though, God empowers us with new confidence to overcome any social anxiety that we may feel and to form meaningful connections with other members of the group.

In shaping us according to His will, **God can use anything** as an opportunity for growth, even our failures and losses. As Step 7 is outworked, we will make progress if we **look out for and make the most of opportunities** to grow and develop, even in difficult circumstances.

- Which of your shortcomings has God already removed or diminished?

- Which of your shortcomings do you still hope to have removed?

- For each shortcoming, consider possible opportunities that God could provide to help you outgrow this shortcoming.

Shortcoming	Possible Opportunities

- Make a commitment to follow through on the work that may be required of you to have your shortcomings removed.

ONWARDS AND UPWARDS

In Step 7, we have humbly **asked God to remove our shortcomings** and **begun this transformational process**.

- On a scale of 1-10, how much effort have you put into your Step 7?
1 indicates little effort. 10 indicates extreme effort.

① ② ③ ④ ⑤ ⑥ ⑦ ⑧ ⑨ ⑩

- What have been your most significant realisations in Step 7?

- How could you apply the principles of Step 7 to help you **throughout** your recovery journey?

- Are you ready to move on to Step 8?

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