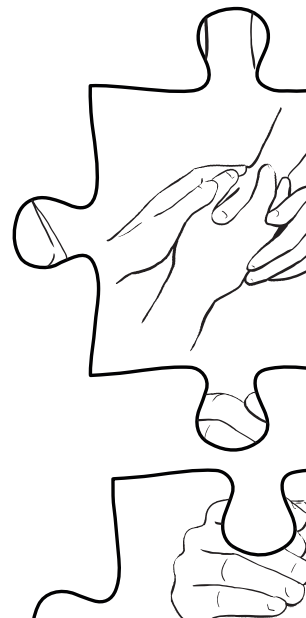
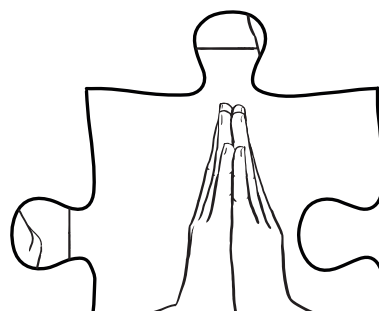
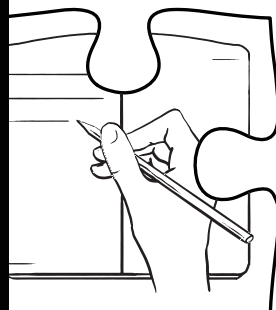
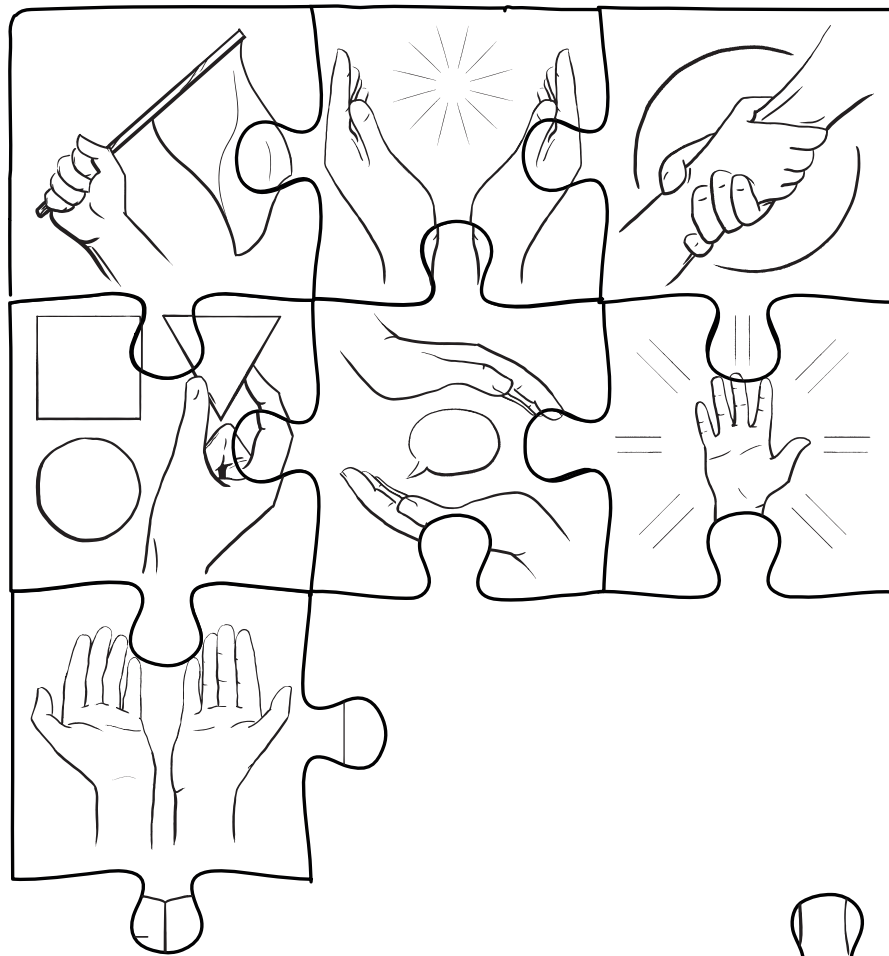
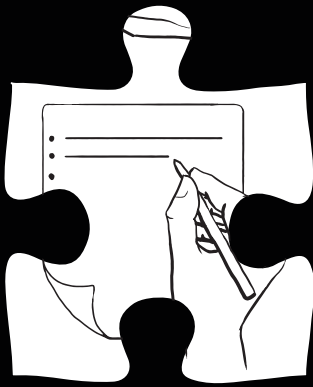


EXODUS STEPWORK PROGRAMME

STEP EIGHT

“We made a list of all persons we had harmed and became willing to make amends to them all.”



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AN OUTWARD FOCUS

Our journey of healing through the 12 Steps has, so far, been directed upwards and inwards. We have worked on building a surrendered, trusting connection with God, and on developing more authentic, self-aware selves.

In Steps 8 and 9, we turn our attention outwards, to focus on other people and onto mending relationships that have been affected by our past actions and attitudes.

Although we often try to convince ourselves otherwise, the truth is that, when we are living in the culture of addiction and when we act out on our shortcomings, there is always collateral damage to other people – be it slight or severe, intentional, or accidental.

In active addiction, preoccupation, compulsion, and loss of control causes us to neglect and/or mistreat those around us, as we single-mindedly seek out our drug or behaviour of choice. Harm to others is also caused when our behaviour is driven by character defects, such as anger, selfishness, entitlement, dishonesty, codependency, fear, etc.

In recovery, cleaning up the interpersonal mess that we have left behind is vital, not only for the sake of others' healing, but also for our own continued spiritual growth and peace of mind. Without a deliberate process of reparation, humiliation, guilt, and remorse over the things that we have done can keep us isolated, stuck in the past and trapped in shame. This is not how we desire to live in recovery. In recovery, we desire to live in the present, in freedom and with joy and self-worth.

So, in Step 8, we initiate the journey of repairing and reconciling relationships that have been negatively affected by our behaviour.

Although we may feel fatigued at this point, having already spent much time examining our character flaws and wrongdoings, we must persevere and stay the course. Step 8 is the start of a process that can free us from feelings of being “less than” and allow us to, once again, look others in the eye, without disgrace or fear.



Whoever conceals his transgressions will not prosper, but he who confesses and forsakes them will obtain mercy.

Proverbs 28:13



And behold, a lawyer stood up to put him to the test, saying, “Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?” He said to him, “What is written in the Law? How do you read it?” And he answered, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself.” And he said to him, “You have answered correctly; do this, and you will live.

Luke 10:25-28

We begin by identifying the people we have harmed and the specific harm that has been caused to each individual or institution (group of people). We then work on becoming willing to **make amends** to these people.

When we make amends to someone, we deliberately attempt to restore good relations with them. Usually, this involves a direct, face-to-face apology as well some kind of action that confirms our repentance as genuine.

Although, when we make amends, we are likely to use the words, "I'm sorry," at some point, a sincere amends process involves far more than a verbal conversation. It involves accompanying behavioural change. For example, in making amends to a client from whom we have taken money, we not only apologise but also repay, or commit to a plan to repay, what we stole. In making amends to a spouse who we have deceived, we not only ask for forgiveness but take measures to prioritise honesty and transparency.

Here, the well-known statement, "The best apology is changed behaviour," could not be more apt. In a proper amends process, we don't just say that we are sorry, we prove it, by doing whatever it takes to fix what has been broken and by not repeating old, harmful patterns.

It may be a relief to know that, at this stage, we do not need to be concerned with when, where, and how this will all take place. In Step 8, we are not required to make any direct amends, only to become willing to do so. Like Step 6, Step 8 is a preparation Step, in which we get ready to act. Making amends is the task of Step 9, and we are not there yet.

For many of us, reconciliation in our relationships will already be underway. Much of the obvious and immediate damage that we cause in addiction ceases when we get clean, as we no longer need to steal, lie, and manipulate to "survive". We can now be fully present in the company of those around us and our newfound values go a long way towards restoration with others.

However, Steps 8 and 9 are still very necessary and powerful Steps, that attest to our commitment to do things completely differently going forward.

- Do you accept that you have, intentionally or unintentionally, harmed others through your past actions and attitudes?

- How do you feel about the harm that you have caused?

- How do you feel about the process of making amends?

- How have your relationships improved in recovery so far?

- What actions and attitudes have contributed to improvement in your relationships?

- How does the process of making direct amends demonstrate your willingness to change?

- What is your understanding of the process of repentance?

- How could working Step 8 benefit others?

- How could working Step 8 benefit you?

MADE A LIST OF ALL PERSONS WE HAD HARMED

Making a list of those we have harmed is not easy. Owning up to and taking responsibility for our mistreatment of others can be extremely uncomfortable. Pride can easily stir up feelings of defensiveness while shame can leave us reluctant to admit what we have done. Denial can also be problematic, blinding us to the true impact of our behaviour. Working through the process takes prayerful reflection, humility, and courage.

Properly understanding the meaning of the word, “harm” is important, as this ensures that our list is thorough. There are many different forms of harm. Sometimes, harm is overt, for example, in instances of abuse or theft of property that have left others physically affected. Other times, the injury is less obvious, for example, in instances of deception, self-centeredness, manipulation, blame, control, entitlement, and a lack of appreciation, that have left others with invisible, but very real, internal scars.

Our amends list includes all kinds of hurts – physical, mental, and emotional. It includes people who we consciously harmed and those whose injury we did not intend or comprehend at the time. It includes harm that we caused in addiction and harm that we have caused in recovery. It includes people to whom we are still close, and those who are no longer in our lives. It includes those with whom we want to reconcile and those to whom we can’t imagine apologising.

In developing our amends list, our Step 4 inventory is a valuable resource. If we have worked Step 4 well, our inventory will reveal those to whom we need to make amends and the reasons there for. We can also refer to the feedback that we received in Step 5 to compile our list, as well as experiences that we have had in relationships themselves.

Where we are struggling to connect with the specific impact that we have had on a person, reflecting on the situation from the other person’s point of view can be insightful. This can also be helpful when it comes to listing people who we feel reluctant about including.

Sometimes, we will be faced with including people on our amends list who we will be unlikely to be able to meet with face-to-face, perhaps because they are deceased, estranged from us, or a far-removed institution. These people should not be excluded. Even in a person’s absence, we can make amends. Step 9 will reveal how we go about this and why it is necessary.

Before we conclude our list, we must not forget the harm that we have caused ourselves along the way. Many of our shortcomings are not only hurtful to others, but also self-defeating. In active addiction, we do significant damage, across all areas of our lives, and our relationship with ourselves becomes distorted and disconnected. Step 8 is an opportunity to put a much-needed practice of self-forgiveness into place, and so our amends list is only complete once we have added our own name.

- Why is humility essential in working Step 8?

- How does courage help you to work this Step?

- How have you practiced humility and courage in your journey through the 12 Steps thus far?

- Which people jump to mind when considering harm that you have caused to others?

- What are some of the ways in which you have caused others overt (physical) harm?

- What are some of the ways in which you have caused “invisible” (mental and emotional) harm?

- Which of your shortcomings have caused others the most harm?

- How could pride hinder your progress in this Step?

- How could shame hinder your progress in this Step?

- How could denial hinder your progress in this Step?

- What could denial be preventing you from acknowledging about your impact on others?

- How does “putting yourself in someone else’s shoes” help you to be thorough in Step 8?

- With which people would it be impossible or extremely difficult to make face-to-face amends?

- For what do you need to make amends to yourself?

BECAME WILLING

Many of us feel apprehensive when working Step 8. Fear of rejection, judgement, or a confrontational response can cause us to have serious reservations about the amends process.

Here, it is not helpful to entertain projections and assumptions. We cannot focus on Step 8 when we are preoccupied with Step 9. Rather, we help ourselves when we keep in mind that, at this stage, no actual amends are required.

In fact, it is wise to not begin making amends just yet. We can create further harm by acting impulsively and making amends that have not been properly thought through. We must consider how an amends process will affect the receiver, especially where disclosure of previously withheld information is a factor.

In developing willingness, resentments are another common stumbling block. Unwillingness to make amends to a certain person can easily arise when we perceive that person as having done unresolved damage to us. We may think things like, “Why should I make amends to someone who hasn’t owned their own part and probably won’t made amends to me?” or, “I only behaved the way that I did because of what they did to me.”

In such instances, we must do our best to resist the lures of pride, blame and a victim-mentality. Step 8 has nothing to do with what others have done, and everything to do with taking ownership of our own behaviour. Making amends does not mean that we must accept responsibility for everything that went wrong. It only means accepting responsibility for the role that we played.



Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive.

Collosians 3:12-13

Resentments and reconciliation simply do not mix. If we do not resolve our resentments before making amends, it is likely that our apologies will not be authentic or liberating.

Here, the spiritual principle of forgiveness is imperative. No matter who and no matter what, we must (in time) find ways to forgive, if we wish to live well. About this, the Bible is unequivocal.

Unforgiveness is a liability that perpetuates cycles of negativity and hinders our capacity for genuine healing and growth. On the other hand, when we truly forgive, we experience a decrease in anxiety and depression, an increase in hope, improved self-worth, enhanced wellbeing, more steadfast relationships, and a greater sense of personal power. Forgiveness is freeing. It allows us to heal and to move on from experiences that could otherwise disable us.

Our forgiveness of others is also crucial as this is a condition upon which our own forgiveness rests. We can consider the grace and love shown to us in recovery as an example of the grace and love we are to extend to others. Remembering that forgiveness is not an emotion but a choice is extremely beneficial for those of us struggling in this area, as is petitioning God to soften our hearts. Sometimes, it is *only* through the grace of God that we find the capacity to release those who have caused us harm.

Whilst we are in a process of forgiveness, it is important to, nevertheless, include on our list those people we are trying to forgive.

We may also feel reluctant to include people on our list who we harmed inadvertently, thinking to ourselves, "But I never meant to hurt anyone." This is missing the point. In Step 8, unintentionality is not an excuse to disregard a harm that was nevertheless caused. We take responsibility for all our wrongdoings, no matter our objectives or intentions at the time.

- Do you have any reservations about working Step 8?

- What fears do you have about making amends?

- How rational are these fears?

- How might you overcome your apprehension?

- How has grace and love been extended to you in recovery?

- Is it difficult for you to consider making amends to a person by whom you have also been harmed?

- Why do you think this is so?

- To whom do you still feel anger or resentment towards?

a) Person	b) Relationship	c) Wrongdoing	d) Shortcoming	e) Impact
Elizabeth	Wife	Deception Telling lies Hiding behaviour	Dishonesty	Hurt, anger, insecurity, mistrust

- Rate your general state of willingness to make amends to these individuals. Use the scale of 1-10 where 1 indicates, "I am not at all willing," and 10 indicates, "I am completely willing."

① ② ③ ④ ⑤ ⑥ ⑦ ⑧ ⑨ ⑩

- Are there specific people on your list that you are unwilling to make amends to at this stage?

- How could you work on becoming willing?

AMENDS LIST

Impact							
Shortcoming							
Wrongdoing							
Relationship							
Person							

Person							
Relationship							
Wrongdoing							
Shortcoming							
Impact							

Person							
Relationship							
Wrongdoing							
Shortcoming							
Impact							

ONWARDS AND UPWARDS

In Step 8, we have dug deep emotionally and spiritually, to identify the people we have harmed along the way, through our addiction and by acting on our shortcomings. We have also worked on getting ready to engage in a process of repentance.

- On a scale of 1-10, how much effort have you put into Step 8?
1 indicates no effort. 10 indicates extreme effort.

① ② ③ ④ ⑤ ⑥ ⑦ ⑧ ⑨ ⑩

- What have been your most significant realisations in Step 8?

- How could you apply the principles of Step 8 to help you *throughout* your recovery journey?

- Are you ready to move on to Step 9?

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