



Racist Anonymous Fellowship

Step Study

Version 2.0

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Step One

*“We admitted we were powerless over racism
and that our lives have become unmanageable”*

Introduction

“In a racist society, those of us who are called white passively enjoy the benefits of whiteness. We do not have to DO anything in particular for the system to continue to work to our benefit. But we certainly enjoy the benefits, whether the enjoyment is conscious or unconscious. And we believe that we are psychologically dependent on the rewards of privilege. We tend to perpetuate behaviors that support inequity, despite the negative consequences of which we are aware. . . . As we come to understand something about institutional racism, we begin to have some clarity about how people of color can be made ill by endless and unrelenting assaults against their very being. We learn about internalized racial inferiority and the toll it takes on people of color. We begin to understand the impact of racism on the physical, emotional and financial health of people of color.”¹

The problem of institutional racism seems unsurmountable. We feel powerless to make a sustained change with major impact. Helpless and hopeless we have felt the guilt and shed the tears and perhaps engaged in social justice activities which served to console us on some superficial way . . . until we hear again about yet another social injustice to people who continue to be minimalized, marginalized, and disenfranchised by institutional racism.

Even when we think we are not racist; we must become aware and take responsibility for complicity with a culture and its institutions that are racist. It calls for personal confession and a personal willingness to learn and act.

In step one, I am honest with myself and others. I am racist. And I cannot live as a practicing racist. I may not be able to change institutional racism, but I can change myself within institutional racism. The change begins with me.

“I have decided to stick with love. Hate is too great a burden to bear”

MLK

¹ <http://www.antiracistalliance.com/WhitePrivilegeAsAddiction.pdf>

Step One Stories

My Name is Randall and I am a Racist

A friend of mine decided to begin a group to talk about racism in his church and modeled it after Alcoholics Anonymous/Twelve-Step groups in which members begin meetings by saying “my name is _____ and I am an alcoholic.” Twelve-step folks gather around common powerlessness and failures and heal by speaking the truth about their lives. In my friend’s group, people introduce themselves by saying “my name is _____ and I am a racist.” The group is called “Racists Anonymous” and is now growing into other groups across the country. It also received some national media coverage on PBS.

At this time in my life I do not know one white person who wants to be known as a racist.

In my life one of the things I feel some pride about is the way in which I have tried over some decades now to practice racial understanding and racial integration. Although I was raised in an environment of overt racism, I have not felt myself to be a racist since about 1968 when I was in college in Memphis during the sanitation strike and the death of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. But since 2010 some new realizations have had a strong impact on me, especially after Ferguson, Cleveland, Charleston, Baton Rouge.....and all the rest.

I am not racist in the extreme sense of white supremacy movements who believe some races of people are superior to others. Most people would probably consider me a white liberal. But I consider myself to be a racist now in that I live in a society where systemic racism exists everywhere. I live within that system. As a white man I live with privilege that I seldom think of as privilege. I do not know what it is like to be black in America. I have been reminded of the unconscious biases that I carry in this environment and I now assume that there are many more of which I remain unaware.

I am aware now of how much (mostly unconscious) effort I have given over the years to being sure to drop phrases or names in some situations to give evidence that I am not a racist. Sometimes I felt a special need for this when in the presence of African American friends. I have a few who have been willing to gently point out that this was not very authentic. My work on this goes on. I proceed with compassion for myself, a sense of humor and the liberating awareness that people can change. I also feel a growing sense of horror about the reality that “the United States of America was established as a white society, founded upon the genocide of one race and then the enslavement of yet another.” (Jim Wallis) It is now very clear to me that the domination that began with slavery has not ended but has simply taken on new forms in each generation until the present, such as massive incarceration of black Americans and the widespread violence against African Americans by many law enforcements officers.

I believe the words, “you shall know the truth and the truth will make you free.” Naming and accepting the kind of racism that still lives in my consciousness is liberating for me. I am aware of how much energy I have spent over the years trying to be sure that people knew I was not a racist.

So, my name is Randall and I am a racist. White supremacy remains the soup in which our country swims and off of which white America continues to feed. I partake of that soup daily.

With this openly acknowledged, I am moving forward in my life with a lighter load. And I am finding good company with others, black and white, who are also finding ways to tell the truth about racism in America. ²

² <https://lynchingsitesmem.org/news/my-name-randall-and-i-am-racist> ; *Rev. Randall Mullins is a native of Memphis and was a student there in 1968 when Dr. King was assassinated. He is a retired minister in the United Church of Christ and lived most of his adult life in Seattle.*

A personal confession: I am a racist

As a child I had very positive contacts with African Americans, and never recall telling a racist joke or using the “n-word.” As an adult I have tried to support equality for all, had excellent relationships with Black colleagues, and supported Black Lives Matter. But the recent events have shocked me into the realization of how deep the systemic racism is in our society and how my eyes are being opened to its pervasiveness.

In the interfaith world I am quite aware of how racial hatred is related to anti-Semitism and Islamophobia. They all represent a built-in bias against people whose looks, dress, and worship are different. Our cultural institutions and foundational documents are supposed to lead us to respect all people. “Liberty and justice for all,” “All men are created equal, endowed by their creator with unalienable rights,” “government of the people, by the people, and for the people,” etc. But in reality, they seem to be aspirations that do not work out in practice.

Our religious scriptures teach us that we are all created in the image of God, that we are to love our neighbors and even our enemies, and yet religious institutions are often segregated by race and perpetuate practices that do the opposite of our religious teachings.

As a white person I was taught that our police were to protect us and keep us safe. Even when stopped for a traffic violation (fortunately not in the past few decades) I never had to fear being shot. Unfortunately, my experience has not been that of those growing up and living in Black communities, or being Black in predominantly white communities. The “warrior police” has more likely been their experience. Of course, not all police are bad, and of course there are bad actors in the force, but even good people in a bad system can get caught up in denial, participate in group think, and get carried away with resorting to use of deadly force.

We should remember that early on police had the task of tracking down escaped slaves and returning them to their masters. Is this attitude of treating Blacks as property rather than persons still an unconscious factor in the police culture? Property is to be controlled and made to serve the owner. Putting on the police uniform can also be putting on a historical mindset.

The era of cell phone cameras has let us all witness events of police brutality, blatant murder and provocations that escalate to physical struggles leading to someone being shot in the back. What was for many a fact of everyday life has now been graphically exposed for the world to see: the systemic racism in our country.

I am now striving to be a “recovering racist,” one who recognizes the problem and seeks to make corrections. I am seeing more clearly how our society and many of its institutions have been built on a racist premise, and I am discovering my own invisible complicity with that system that dehumanizes large segments of our population.

Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel said, “In a free society some are guilty, but all are responsible.” I am not guilty of killing George Floyd or for the shooting of countless Blacks in our society, but I must take responsibility for my role in a society and its institutions that make these acts too commonplace.

I don’t want to be racist, or even non-racist. I want to be anti-racist. The path is not totally clear to me. But I believe it begins with confession, and with increased awareness of society’s institutions and assumptions that permit hatred based on race, skin color, immigrant or refugee status, or religious practice.³

³ <https://therapidian.org/personal-confession-i-am-racist>

I Am Not Racist" Is Nonsense

I never considered myself racist—until about three months ago.

I am a European-descended, able-bodied, cisgender, advance-degree educated, white (hereinafter, POED) woman living in the United States of America. In the politically blue state of Massachusetts to be precise. The only checklist items that would make me more privileged would be to be a white man with a trust fund.

I spent the last 39 years in Georgia. One can drive down a major highway in South Georgia and see a cotton field with a menacingly large Confederate flag flying right in the middle of it. I drove past this field several times a month in college, over 15 years ago. The cotton was never harvested. This was not a crop; this was a statement. *Disgusting*, I would mutter under my breath, driving by.

I heard and believed “I am not racist” from my family, from my community, and my church. We were “good people” who were absolutely “not racist.” I witnessed much overt racism my entire life. However, because I did not participate in this overt racism, I said, “I am not racist.”

The truth is I had no idea that I was (am) a racist. I contributed to racism for decades in ways that were [unconscious](#) and covert. I contributed to racism in ways that were also flagrantly racist. I continue to contribute.

I write this article because I am a racist. I write this because maybe—in my words—you may see how you, my fellow POED, are too.

After the modern-day lynching of Ahmadu Arbery, I woke up. I had no earthly idea what was going on. I could not be bothered to learn.

Instantly, I was deeply, darkly ashamed when I woke up to my role (past and present) in white supremacy (a term that by its very utterance causes POED to deny, deny, deny).³ [Shame](#) is an emotion that POED go to immediately. Shame allows POED to reposition ourselves in a way that makes racism “about us,” attempts to absolve us, beg for *instant* [forgiveness](#). *Yuck*.

When I recounted my shame in a podcast with historian and activist Lisa Sharon Harper, author of *The Good Gospel* and founder of Freedom Road, she told me: “Don’t be ashamed. Be enraged.”

Shame is a problematic emotional function for many reasons. But shame in the context of racism allows us to feel shame yet elicits no change, no work, no moving through it.

At Lisa Sharon Harper's behest, I laid down my shame and decided to pick up the [rage](#). As such, my own anti-racist work began. This is internal work, mind you. At the start, I pushed away my desire to cry, to say "the intent was never" and to argue, "yeah, but I am a good person," and finally, I erased these words from my vocabulary: "I am not racist."

In my studying, I not only began to feel the rage, but I felt movement. I mean, action. I did things that held me accountable. I wrote about my own racism in a journal. I interviewed BIPOC in order to listen and learn (not to center myself), but to hear and provide a space for my largely-POED audience to hear. I donated to organizations doing the work. I looked inside of me. I felt the rage, and I moved into that as a conduit for me—myself—changing. This rage? I recognized that it's a tiny sliver of the rage that BIPOC has been feeling for centuries. I cannot understand centuries, generational [trauma](#). After all, I have been awake for three months. I have felt rage for three months.

I was doing none of the work until I felt the rage. If I turned away, got off social media and thought internally "this is not my problem," I would *not* be doing the work. If I left an argument instead of standing up, that would be un-rage. That would be racist. That would not be my own personal work of anti-racism

Oh, I have fumbled too. I came out hot with my rage on social media in ways that isolated some of my POED "friends." It's OK to feel the rage of racism—especially our own racism. *Ouch. It hurts.* But guess what? It's OK to hurt. More than that? It's time to hurt.

The issue is that I did not know what racism meant. Also, I did not *care* to understand racism. In fact, due to my privilege, I did not *think* about it. I was not emotionally equipped to handle the work. I was fragile.

I said "I am not a racist" when I was the most harmful, the most racist.

Not intentionally. But intentionality is not a requirement of harmful impact.⁹

POED cannot help the way we enter this world of privilege and unconscious bias.

POED enter into a structural system created to work in our favor—to keep POED in power, to keep us biased, to keep us racist and cagey about it, too. We have privilege that affords us the ability to turn away, look away, and consider any race "issues" not our problem. Then, we categorize, harm and dehumanize BIPOC who are fighting for change—in whatever way their voice is spoken.

We judge, we politicize, we legislate, we support, we harm. We ask BIPOC to speak nicer, we peace-out of conversations when race appears. We swoop in to “save” BIPOC and appear as “I am not a racist” for our own selfish back-pats. At some point, we take SATs and go to colleges based on a rigged system, get married or partnered, and run to the redlined suburbs with the “good schools” so we can raise privileged “color-blind” children who then pick up the torch and repeat it: a new generation of I-am-not-racist

We, as POED, have an internal voice and programming that tells us to “protect this white privilege” at all costs. It tells us to move to and stay in the “safe” neighborhoods, where it’s 94% POED. And the worst part? We often have no clue that this privilege lives and breathes and feeds the system in us, in our world. We can only help what we do with the knowledge that we are racist—to do the work. This is a personal work. To write, to look inside, to involve ourselves in the process.

I ask for forgiveness for taking up this much space on the internet with my thoughts around racism. But this is how I refuse to remain complicit. I realized the current world was not about “those racists” out there. It was about this racist right here.

I wasn’t awake until I saw Ahmaud Arbery gunned down in Georgia. Then when I began to do the work outlined in *Me and White Supremacy* by Layla F. Saad.

Maintaining silence around my own racism is not healthy for me. It’s not healthy for my anti-racist commitment. I must write. Not to center—but to declare that I refuse to collude with my privileged conditioning. I refuse to stay quiet in order to keep POED safer, comfortable, and privileged. I’m not showing up as an “ally.” I am showing up for my own integrity, my own work. Because for me to show up authentically in my own life, I cannot and will not stand with white solidarity and white supremacy, not consciously, not another second longer.

I will do racist things in the future. I will fail. I will fall.

But I will not collude. I will not protect my own feelings. I will listen. This is my commitment.

I have one last call to action for my POED brothers and sisters reading: Stop saying “I am not racist.” Instead ask instead, “How am I racist?” Remember, we were meant to be blind, stay asleep, and hungry to remain comfortable and privileged. At the very expense of other human lives.

The shame of our complicity is great. It hurts. It stings. It bleeds. Keep your eyes open. Look. See the damage. See the harm. See the system. Just remember: don't feel the shame for long: Feel the rage.

I am a racist. I always have been

I grew up hearing words and saying words in casual conversation that I did not understand. I still do not fully comprehend the true weight of the effects that those words have on other people. I said them all. Any slur, epithet, or allusion that you can possibly think of, I have said. In moments of anger. In moments of "humor". In everyday conversation between the family that loved and raised me, these words were never said with any particular malice or inflection of hate. They were just words. Nobody corrected me when I would say them as they would when I was using swear words or intentionally speaking spitefully in an attempt to hurt another person. Their permission made me believe they were perfectly fine to say.

I then grew up. I heard the same words being spoken in my school by my peers, of all races. Sometimes people might be a little upset and give a "Hey man, not cool." But still, the response was not nearly as severe as when I was a child using profanity. I said these words with my friends. We would joke around and call each other these words, and genuinely laugh at our imitations of accents being made. I never gave it a second thought. It was never meant maliciously. We were just having a good time. I would go to classes on current events and hear and see the reactions from around the world about various events caused by racial tensions, but I never fully understood what was actually being shared with me. I missed the point of what those educators were trying to show me.

I became an adult. At some point in my life, I stopped saying these things as often. I have no idea where the turning point was or what made me suddenly feel slightly ashamed of myself if I was about to crack a joke or say something about another race. Maybe it was the experiences I had been through, or the places I had been. Maybe it was looking back throughout my education and realizing that I had not just been misled, but I had been lied to. Although the people who taught me were good natured and fantastic educators, perhaps they didn't even know the truth about or question what they were teaching, and subsequently perpetuated those lies from generation to generation.

The Pilgrims and the Indians just didn't all come together and have a happy celebration as is depicted in so many textbook images. The Pilgrims were starving and dying in a new land that was not theirs in the first place. The people those Pilgrims were killing brought them food so that they did not starve. It did not stop them from dying at the hands of those they helped. It still has not stopped.

The slaves that were freed during the Civil War were free people, they told me. Those same people who were supposed to be free, could not vote. The North and the Union that had freed them did not want them in their cities. They were beaten just as badly by those who freed them as the slave masters that whipped them on the plantation. They were given 40 acres and a mule and told they were free men, to live their lives in a country

divided between those that did not want them, and those that hated them for no longer being their property. They were never truly free.

They taught me about the Civil Rights Movement. How it gave Black people the same rights as everyone else. They did not tell me how people were still discriminated against in their search for jobs, education, housing, and for justice for their sons and daughters and mothers and fathers still being murdered by the people of the country that proclaimed them free. They were never truly free. They were never truly given the same rights as everyone else. They still aren't.

The internment of Japanese American citizens into concentration camps during the second World War, the Bisbee Deportation of striking mine workers in Arizona of the early 1900's, and the Zoot Suit Riots of the 1940's all serve as just a few of the countless examples throughout our country's history that are glossed over or outright ignored by most standardized history education curriculum. The curriculum they imparted was full of idealism, but not quite grounded in gravitas with the entirety of the truth. I've come to realize; we have a history that has never told the full side of every participant's story. Clearly, words and images, and the lack thereof have power.

At some point in my life I started listening and not just hearing. I listened to the words that I had heard and said for my entire life. I listened to the reactions of people those words were being said to or about. I tried to compare their reactions to what I had learned about the things I was not taught in school. I tried to think about these things and how they really came across to the people that they were about. I didn't get it. I still said and thought these words. Sometimes with a twinge of guilt, but I still saw nothing really wrong with it. I still have thoughts about people in more subtle ways that are ingrained in everything I absorbed throughout my life, either through the education system or the actions and words and beliefs of those who raised me. I see a person with dark skin walking towards me in an area I am unfamiliar with and my immediate reaction TO THIS DAY is, "Should I be afraid?" I immediately think that the idea is completely ridiculous. I don't even know this person I say to myself. But my brain knows, and has been trained since birth, that this person is different from me because of how they look and I should be afraid. I know I have to correct my brain and its entire lifetime of learned behavior. Every. Single. Day.

Every single day I have to take my entire life of learned behavior and remind it that there are hundreds and hundreds of years of human hurt, pain, and death behind the simple words that never really seemed that big of a deal to me. It's not how they are meant. It's what they actually mean. It's the weight of hundreds of years of history behind these words. Saying them is not just a word said. It is a distillation of a history of pain that you cannot comprehend if it has not been the history of your life. I will never understand these words fully. But they are wrong. They hurt. And if I seem angry in addressing it

when those like me throw them out casually, it is not because I view myself as better than the person saying them. It's because I am furious at myself as well. I fear these thoughts will never go away. They require constant confrontation when they arise, and it infuriates me that some people will never even take the time to listen, when I know I hear these words echoing in my head just as often as they do. Listen. Hear. Speak out against them. It's not a one size fits all victory. It's a daily struggle with your own mind and the sum of your entire life experience.

I am a racist. I always have been. With work, knowledge, empathy, and love, I won't always have to be.⁴

[4https://www.savannahnow.com/opinion/20200715/opinion-taylor-lairsey-‘am-racist’](https://www.savannahnow.com/opinion/20200715/opinion-taylor-lairsey-‘am-racist’)

Off the Beaten Path: True Confessions Of A...Racist?

“So,” my friend announced, “I think I am a racist.”

“What?” I inquired.

She continued, “Back in the day when I was a kid my brother and I played a game with those, what our family called, ‘festive nuts.’ You know the assorted kind, in the shell, that come in a bag around fall and through the holiday. It’s kind of an acquired taste, to be honest. My mom always put them in a bowl that looked like the slice of a tree. It had bark on it and in the center on this little island thingy were two larger holes for a silver nutcracker and four giant tooth pics that could do some damage.”

Puzzled, inquisitive and, yet, not sure I wanted to know the answer, I asked, “So what about the festive nuts?”

“Well, cracking open those nuts wasn’t the easiest thing. Like sometimes you’d crunch them and they would break into smithereens or you’d work like crazy with the picks to get out a decent piece, and then it would be rancid or you’d get a taste of that bitter stuff holding the good parts together like in a walnut or pecan.”

I wondered where this conversation was going. “Ah hah,” I commented.

“So, my brother and I would play that we were baby doctors, delivering babies when we cracked open the nuts, replacing the forceps and speculum with a cracker and picks. The object was to deliver a perfect baby, so that meant we had to keep the nut whole using the nut bowl instruments. The pecan and walnut halves had to be whole and without a nick,” she said with a blush.

“Interesting,” I noted, asking myself, how long have I known this woman?

“All the nuts had their challenges. The hazel nuts were slippery and small, and had thicker shells, so they were hard to keep in the middle of the cracker and then sometimes when you finally snapped it, they would fly all over and hit the wall. Almonds were a little like that, too. And the Brazil nuts... they were bigger but hard to keep in the cracker and the nut meat was like attached to the shell. Very difficult to get out unscathed,” she laughed.

I nodded. This woman has advanced degrees and considered, at one time, going into psychology.

She continued almost kind of like she was excited about what she was telling me, “The pecans and walnuts had that weird bitter divider stuff in between the halves. The walnuts sprung open nicely if you got them on the seam, but the pecans were so smooth, like they were varnished, and they were really hard, but I think I liked the taste of them the best.”⁵

⁵ <https://www.journal-topics.com/articles/off-the-beaten-path-true-confessions-of-aracist/>

Working the Steps

1. What does racism as an addiction mean to me?
2. How has my racism affected me physically? Mentally? Spiritually? Emotionally?
3. How does the self-centered part of my racism affect my life and the life of those around me?
4. Have I blamed other people for my racist attitude and behavior?
5. Have I compared my racist attitude and behavior with other people's addictions?
6. What does unmanageability mean to me relative to societal and/or personal racism.
7. What troubles have been caused because of my racist attitude and behavior?
8. Have I used racism or race identity privilege to gain an advantage of others who may be disenfranchised, marginalized or otherwise oppressed by the majority?
9. What reservations am I still holding onto?
10. What could my life be like if I surrendered completely?
11. Am I WILLING: to follow a sponsor's direction, go to meetings regularly and give recovery my best effort?
12. Have I made peace with the fact that I'm a racist and that I'll have to do things to remain non-racist and ideally anti-racist?

Step Two

*“Came to believe that a power greater than
ourselves could restore us to sanity”*

Introduction

Taking Step One brought us face-to-face with the truth. We were not equal to the task of changing any other human being. We needed more than our human experience and intelligence to solve the problem of racism. The Second Step suggested that we were not alone with the problem of racism, white supremacy, and white privilege, if we “came to believe” that help was within our reach.⁶

Racial unity is impossible when racial inequalities are created and maintained by racist policies that are justified by racist ideas. Racist ideas have always been like walls built by powerful Americans to keep us divided, and these walls have always normalized our racial divisions and inequities.

For many of us raised in a religious tradition, we have heard about the importance of love. But, how often have you encountered an individual you felt you could not love? How often have you said, “I love everybody”, but your actions did not hold up to standards of love? Are we excused for loving some and not loving others?

Until you bottom out, on trying to do it on your own, . . . to love as God, yourself and others as God would have each of us to, until we come to the limits of our own fuel supply, there is no reason for us to switch to a higher octane of fuel. That has what has happened. We have done justice, loved mercy, and walked humbly before our God. Yet, social injustice remains. Some of us have prayed, cried, sang, marched, and ‘supported the cause’ as best as we know how. We have been careful act in a non-racist way. Yet, we continue to stumble, racism continues, and the social injustice remains. What else can we do? Where can we turn?

You will not learn to actively draw upon a Larger Source until your usual resources are depleted and revealed as wanting. In fact, you will not even know there is a Larger Source until your own sources and resources fail you. Until and unless there is a person, situation, event, idea, conflict, or relationship that you cannot “manage,” you will never find the True Manager. So God makes sure that several things will come your way that you cannot manage on your own. Self-made people, and all heroic spiritualities, will try

⁶ Al-Anon’s Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, p 13

to manufacture an even stronger self by willpower and determination—to put them back in charge and seeming control. Usually most people admire this, not realizing the unbending, sometimes proud, and eventually rigid personality that will be the long-term result. They will then need to continue in this pattern of self-created successes and defenses. This pushy response does not normally create loving people, but just people in control and in ever-deeper need of control. Eventually, the game is unsustainable, unless you make others, even your whole family, pay the price for your own aggression and self-assertion—which is the common pattern. More commonly, many Christians whittle down the great Gospel to some moral issue over which they can feel totally triumphant and superior, and which usually asks nothing of them personally. The ego always insists on moral high ground, or as Paul brilliantly puts it, “sin takes advantage of commandments to mislead me, and through obeying commandments kills me” (Romans 7:11,13). . . . It is the imperial ego that has to go, and only powerlessness can do the job correctly.⁷

*All we can do is keep out of the way, note, and
weep over our defensive behaviors,
keep our various centers from closing down—and
the Presence that is surely the Highest Power is
then obvious, all-embracing, and immediately effective.*

Father Richard Rohr

⁷ Rohr, Richard. *Breathing Under Water: Spirituality and the Twelve Steps*. St. Anthony Messenger Press. Kindle Edition.

Step Stories

Al-Anon is a spiritual program based on no particular religion, and no religious belief is required. To those of us who have had less than wonderful experiences with religion in the past, this freedom is important. Spirituality doesn't have to imply a particular philosophy or moral code; it simply means that there is a Power greater than ourselves upon which we can come to rely. Whether we call this a Higher Power, God, good orderly direction, Allah, the universe, or another name, it is vital to our recovery that we come to believe in a Power greater than ourselves (Step Two). Until we do, the rest of the Steps will not make much sense. This Higher Power might be likened to the electricity that operates the lights and machinery of our recovery. It's not necessary to understand what electricity actually is to enjoy its use—all we need to do is turn on the switch!

I may be seeking a more loving God in whom I can place my trust, or facing a challenge that puts my long-established beliefs to a test, or struggling with the very idea of a Higher Power.⁸

*“When I have at last realized that my problems are too big to solve by myself. . .
I need not be alone with them if I am willing to accept help from a Higher Power.”
Al-Anon's Twelve Steps & Twelve Traditions*

⁸ Family Groups, Al-Anon. *Courage to Change—One Day at a Time in Al-Anon II* (p. 216). Al-Anon Family Groups. Kindle Edition.

Working the Step⁹

1. Did your family claim a certain religion growing up?
2. What are the positive and negative aspects of your family religion?
3. Do you still practice your family's religion, or are you seeking help from a different area?
4. What people in your life have helped you discover the unmanageability of your life?
5. What did you like best about your childhood best friends and what did they like best about you? Are these important qualities that would make for a good "higher power" to help you?
6. What do you want from your "higher power?"
7. Can you learn to trust the individual or group you choose?

⁹ <https://www.recoveryplace.com/blog/working-the-steps-step-2/>

Step Three

*Made a decision to turn our lives and
will over to the power of God as we
understood God*

Introduction

We were now at *Step Three*. Many of us said to our Maker, *as we understood Him*:

"God, I offer myself to Thee-to build with me and to do with me as Thou wilt. Relieve me of the bondage of self, that I may better do Thy will. Take away my difficulties, that victory over them may bear witness to those I would help of Thy Power, Thy Love, and Thy Way of life. May I do Thy will always!"

We thought well before taking this step making sure we were ready; that we could at last abandon ourselves utterly to Him.¹⁰

¹⁰ A.A. Big Book, p. 63

Step Stories

Over and over again

I find myself taking Step Three over and over again. Unfortunately, I often wait until a problem starts to overwhelm me before I finally give in and turn it over to my Higher

Power. Nevertheless, today I am striving to place my entire will and life in my Higher Power's hands with the willingness to accept His or Her will for me, no matter what.

The awareness I am gaining in *Racist Anonymous* lets me know that my internal racism is bigger than I thought and that could that I thought I was doing, may have indeed been hurtful or self-serving. It's only when I let go and trust the inner voice that quietly nudges me in the direction of my Higher Power's choosing that hurtful habits can be surfaced and eradicated.

Today's Reminder:

Where am I trying to hide internal racism from a Higher Power? Are there racist ideas and habits I am afraid to let go? Can I trust God to keep me safer than my racist ideas and habits? Are my efforts to control that area making my life better and more manageable?

*“God will take care of you
Through every day, o'er all the way
He will take care of you
God will take care of you”*

Heritage Singers

Working the Step

1. How has acting on my own self-will affected my life? How has it affected others?
2. How can I take action to turn it over?
3. What is the difference between my will and God's will?
4. How is my Higher Power working in my life?
5. Is my current concept of a Higher Power working my need to change?
6. What does "to the care of" mean to me?
7. How might my life be changed if I make the decision to "turn it over?"
8. Am I unwilling to do things in my recovery that are being suggested? If so, why?
9. How does surrender in the first step relate to or help the third step?

Step Four

“Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.”

Introduction

After acknowledging the problem, we must also acknowledge that it has impacted many areas of our lives, consciously and unconsciously. Each of us must explore ways, past and present, in which the ideology of white supremacy has negatively impacted us: our understanding of history, our social networks, and our patterns of interacting with people of color, with an emphasized focus on microaggressions.

It has been said that we spend countless hours running from knowledge of ourselves. As white people, in particular, we direct a lot of energy toward avoiding difficulty: difficult introspection, difficult topics of conversation, and potential confrontation with others. We may establish rules about “no religion or politics” at the dinner table, or we may quickly try to change the subject when someone tells a racist joke at a holiday gathering. In work circles, we may remain silent when a supervisor makes a racist comment and wrestle with ourselves, internally, not knowing what to say in response.

Before we can determine how to respond to overt racism that appears in the world around us, we must first venture deep inside of ourselves to unearth the ways that we, too, have internalized messages of white supremacy. Any such internal exploration requires fortitude of spirit, as well as tools for uncovering portions of ourselves that are often hidden. In recovery, we believe that internal exploration is enhanced through community with others, as the journey toward inner truth can be overwhelming and too intimidating to be made alone.

Pursuing honest reflections of ourselves requires tremendous courage. This type of self-study is essential to progress in our recovery and encompasses various facets of ourselves and our understandings. Three areas have been identified above: our understanding of history, our social networks, and our patterns of interacting with people of color, though there are countless other areas in which we may grow in knowledge of ourselves to further inform our recovery efforts. Tools designed to enhance the self-study process referenced above can be found at the recovery website, while we may also engage in honest exploration and assessment of ourselves in our recovery groups and in self- designed ways.¹¹

¹¹ This material is from <https://recoveryfromwhiteconditioning.com> to be used only during the pilot program of RA.

Step Stories

My shame, guilt and fear

Part of my recovery has involved reversing some old ways of thinking. It had been my habit to avoid painful feelings and situations, to play it safe and keep away from risk. But life involves one risk after another, and some pain is unavoidable. *Racist Anonymous* helps me to accept what is. Instead of running away, I am learning to look at the source of my *racist thoughts, beliefs, attitudes and behaviors*. As a result, I find that pain passes much more quickly, and what I gain is freedom from *shame, guilt and fear*. *Racist Anonymous* gives me tools, such as the Fourth Step inventory, with which I can take an honest look at myself. A supportive Sponsor, my Higher Power, the Serenity Prayer, and many *Racist Anonymous* meetings help me to find the courage to deal with *shame, guilt, fear and risk*. When I was avoiding taking risks, fear was always with me, just over my shoulder. Now I go through it and come out the other side, often unscathed. I no longer have to keep a constant watch for potential *missteps*. Instead, I can occupy myself with living.

Today's Reminder Wonderful things can happen today because I welcome the thrill of participating in my own life.¹²

“Avoiding danger is no safer in the

long run than outright exposure.

Life is either a daring adventure or nothing.”

Helen Keller

¹² Adapted from Family Groups, Al-Anon. *Courage to Change—One Day at a Time in Al-Anon II* (p. 75). Al-Anon Family Groups. Kindle Edition.

How can I cure my white guilt?

I'm riddled with shame. White shame. This isn't helpful to me or to anyone, especially people of color. I feel like there is no "me" outside of my white/upper middle class/cisgender identity. I feel like my literal existence hurts people, like I'm always taking up space that should belong to someone else.

I consider myself an ally. I research proper etiquette, read writers of color, vote in a way that will not harm P.O.C. (and other vulnerable people). I engage in conversations about privilege with other white people. I take courses that will further educate me. I donated to Black Lives Matter. Yet I fear that nothing is enough. Part of my fear comes from the fact that privilege is invisible to itself. What if I'm doing or saying insensitive things without realizing it?

Another part of it is that I'm currently immersed in the whitest environment I've ever been in. My family has lived in the same apartment in East Harlem for four generations. Every school I attended, elementary through high school, was minority white, but I'm now attending an elite private college that is 75 percent white. I know who I am, but I realize how people perceive me and this perception feels unfair.

I don't talk about my feelings because it's hard to justify doing so while people of color are dying due to systemic racism and making this conversation about me would be again centering whiteness. Yet bottling it up makes me feel an existential anger that I have a hard time channeling since I don't know my place. Instead of harnessing my privilege for greater good, I'm curled up in a ball of shame. How can I be more than my heritage?¹³

Search me, O God, and know my heart; test my thoughts.

Point out anything you find in me that makes you sad,

and lead me along the path of everlasting life.

Psalm 139:23-24 TLB

¹³ <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/08/14/style/white-guilt-privilege.html>

I Need Courage¹⁴

The concern I lay bare before God today is my need for courage
I need courage to be honest - Honest in my use of words Honest in accepting
responsibility Honest in dealing with myself Honest in dealing with my fellows Honest in
my relations with God

I need courage to face the problems of my own life - the problems of personal values:
They are confused They are often unreal
They are too exacting for comfort

The problems of my job:
Perhaps I am working at cross-purposes with my own desires, ambitions, equipment.
Perhaps I am arrogant instead of taking pride in doing work well.
Perhaps I am doing what I am doing just to prove a point -
spending a lifetime to prove a point that is not worth providing after all.
Perhaps have never found anything that could challenge me, and my life seems wasted.

Here in the quietness I lay bare honest, for the guidance to deal effectually with the
problems of my own life.
O God, thou wilt not despise!

¹⁴ From For The Inward Journey; The Writings of Howard Thurman

The concern which I lay bare before God today¹⁵

My concern for the life of the world in these troubled times.
I confess my own inner confusion as I look out upon the world..

There is food for all - many are hungry.
There are clothes enough for all - many are in rags.
There is room enough for all - many are crowded.
There are none who want war - preparations for conflict abound.

I confess my own share in the ills of the times.
I have shirked my own responsibilities as a citizen.
I have not been wise in casting my ballot.
I have left to others a real interest in making
a public opinion worthy of democracy.
I have been concerned about my own little job, my own little security, my own shelter,
my own bread.

I have not really cared about jobs for others,
security for others, shelter for others, bread for others.
I have not worked for peace; I want peace,
but I have voted and worked for war.
I have silenced my own voice that it may not
be heard on the side of any cause, however right,
if it meant running risks or damaging my own little reputation.

Let Thy light burn in me that I may, from this moment on, take effective steps within my
own powers,
to live up to the light and courageously to pay for
the kind of world I so deeply desire.

¹⁵ https://www.trinitychurchboston.org/sites/default/files/ART-Prayerbook-FINAL_0.pdf

Working the Step¹⁶

1. What people, places or things do you resent and what led to those resentments?
2. How did your behavior contribute to your resentments?
3. How have your resentments affected your life, your relationships with others and yourself?
4. Who or what do you fear and why? And how do you respond destructively or negatively to your fears?
5. Who or what do you feel ashamed or guilty about?
6. What feelings do you have the most trouble allowing yourself to feel, and how do you act out?
7. How have your fears and resentments affected your friendships, and your family, work and romantic relationships?
8. Have you compulsively sought after sex? Have you used sex to try to fill a spiritual void or loneliness? Have any of your sexual practices hurt others or your self?
9. What do healthy relationships look like to you?
10. Are there secrets that you haven't told anyone or written about in your step work?

¹⁶ <https://www.jasonwahler.com/12-steps-of-aa/step-four-of-aa-alcoholics-anonymous>

Step Five

*Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human
being the exact nature of our wrongs.*

Introduction

In step five we are asked to admit **the exact nature** of our wrongs. However, before we can admit, we must identify, identify the WHY we do the things that we do.

Some of us have looked back to our moral inventory in step four and identified what we characterized as our character defects. Some of us reviewed our moral inventory with a focus on the wrongs that we did to ourselves and others. Whether character defects and/or wrongs done to ourselves and others, our task in this step is two-fold.

1. What is the nature
 - a. What is the nature (the source or cause) of the character defect(s)?
 - b. What is the reason(s) that your wronged yourself or another?
2. Admit to God, ourselves and another human being WHY the character defects exists within you and/or WHY we wronged another and/or ourselves.

For some of us step 4 was a very intense and emotional exercise that required a sponsor, a therapist. we trusted AND our Higher Power in order to be totally honest with ourselves, vulnerable with another and gentle with ourselves. This intense exploration, in many cases, flows over to step 5 when we ask “Why did I do that?, Why do I continue to do that?”

In terms of racist attitudes I harbor, knowingly or not, why do I harbor these attitudes this character defect? How do I first admit and own this character defect? Saying that because this BIPOC people did this is why I have this racist attitude may be fodder for sustaining the attitudes, but is it really the root cause, the exact nature.

In terms of our micro aggressions, why do we commit these acts or say those things? “I did not mean any harm” is not the exact nature of the micro aggression. Whether the intent was or was not to harm, the result was hurtful and our task is to first identify it was wrong and identify WHY you did it.

In step five, many of us very defensive, fragile, and attempt to become the victim. But, realize when these things begin to rise up in ourselves, it is our ego¹⁷ trying to defend

¹⁷ <https://corecounselling.ca/en-garde-how-your-ego-protects-you/>

itself. The ego interferes with our progress of reaching a spiritual awakening. To be truly honest, vulnerable and more toward freedom and spiritual awakening, it is necessary to override the ego in this step. The following guidelines can give you some direction:¹⁸

1. Start with Step Four.
2. Choose a friendly listener.
3. Tell your story.
4. Let go and let God.
5. Make the Fifth Step an ongoing event.

Anonymous. Step 5 AA Telling My Story: Hazelden Classic Step Pamphlets . Hazelden Publishing. Kindle Edition.

"God, Thank You for giving me the strength, faith and courage I needed to get through my 5th Step. I thank you from the bottom of my heart for helping me to know you better, by showing me what has been blocking me from you. Father, please show me if I have omitted anything and help me to honestly see if my stones are properly in place or if I have skimped in any area of this work."¹⁹

¹⁸ Anonymous. Step 5 AA Telling My Story: Hazelden Classic Step Pamphlets . Hazelden Publishing. Kindle Edition.

¹⁹ <http://www.greenbayaa.org/PDF/aaprayers/stepfive.pdf>

Step Stories

I Am a Racist

My family background is typically conservative in the way white Southern families have pretty much always been.

Our ancestors fought on both sides of the Civil War, but mostly for the Confederacy. One ancestor was a prosperous slave holder in South Georgia who, quite rightly, lost everything in the Southern Rebellion to Preserve Slavery. On the other side of the family, my great-grandfather was, among other things, a bootlegger in Mississippi who employed black men to help work his still, and who earned frequent uninvited visits from local Klansmen who disapproved of this economic arrangement. That these same hood-wearing jackals would shoot up the still on one day and buy my great-grandfather's corn squeezings on the next is just another one of those weird duality things. Like most Southern families, the past is a muddle of strange happenings and inherent contradiction.

Either way, the elders of my experience were polite, white Southerners who would never dream of being overtly rude to a "colored" (never a colored person, although occasionally perhaps a "Nigra," that genteel substitute for the horrible word that I was taught from an early age was only used by "white trash"). There was also a belief that Those People were something other, absolutely less-than in some indefinable way, but who might also, through dint of hard work and diligence, elevate themselves above the aforementioned white trash. These were the "good ones" who proved (even then) that racism was over and done with, even though those "good ones" would never be quite good enough to live next door or date your daughter.

The granular slicing of social strata was elaborate. *The point was to always have some group that was lower than your own.*

And it came to pass somehow that at a tender young age, when we lived in the Tennessee tri-city area, I was given a small Stars and Bars of my own. I cannot remember who gave it to me, other than that it was a visiting relative, not my parents. It was not very large, and cheaply made, with staples holding it to a dowel that served as an ersatz flagpole. *Nobody explained anything about it, other than that it was "the Southern flag." I hung it in my room and really didn't think much about it.*

And then we moved to southern Connecticut, where I unpacked my stuff and hung it in my room. I still had no concept of what it meant. And it came to pass that I made friends in the neighborhood who were more overtly racist than anybody I'd known in the South. *Not necessarily more racist, but they lacked the gentility to say "Nigra," preferring that*

other word that gets readers of Huck Finn so riled up these days. And so, like anybody wanting to fit in, I started using it, too.

In the North, I attended an elementary school that was all white, with the lone exception of the son of the caretaker of our church. Willie and I became pretty good friends. You'd think this cognitive dissonance of having a chosen friend who was black and a bunch of racist neighborhood friends would provide a sharp spur of conscience in a young boy. No such luck.

One day, Willie visited my house. I'm not sure if he saw the flag or not. It really didn't occur to me that it might make a difference. But we somehow got into an argument, and I ended up getting mad and dropping the N-bomb on him. He punched me in the gut so hard I dropped to the ground. And he left to walk home, not even asking for a ride or the phone to call his mom.

And we never spoke again.

Make no mistake. I knew I was crossing a line when I said it, and I knew that it was f---d up to do so. But I felt I had it in my power to knock this really nice friend down to size, just because he made me mad about something. But he was having none of that.

I was around 10 years old at the time. The shame of what I did that day still burns. It's the most overtly racist act of my life, and that word has not passed my lips since. *But I can't claim innocence of more subtle racist behaviors, like getting nervous when a group of black males gets on an empty subway car with me, or even just not considering that a great scientific advance might have been realized by a black man or woman, or of being surprised when I met a black man who loves '80s hair-metal bands. Because that's not what they do, right?*

I was not raised by bad or malevolent people. I was not taught to be racist, at least not in any obvious sense. But in a very real way, I was.

I lived in a world where hanging the battle rag was fine, where assuming racial superiority was the order of things, where laughing and joining the guys in crude racial jokes was no problem. I thought I was not a bad or malevolent person. I was wrong. *I'm not sure when I decided to change, not clear on exactly when I quietly took that toy battle rag and threw it in the trash. I'm not sure when I actually realized that I could work to be rid of the burden of lies that led me to assume my superiority based on my pale skin. I've struggled with that for over 40 years, I guess, but even though I like to congratulate myself on how far I've come, the stain remains. Just like that stain remains,*

indelibly, on our nation. If I treat every person I meet from now until I die with full dignity and respect — doubtful, but it's a goal — the stain will remain.

Getting rid of the battle rag or the marble monuments to treason won't change much in the overall calculus of how racial "difference" plays out day to day. But like the day I threw my flag in the trash, it can represent a decision to make conscious choices about the messages we endorse and about how we wish to live, even though we are doomed to never fully succeed. For most whites in my generation, the stain is pronounced. For later generations, for people who do not grow up with the message that a symbol that represents slavery and segregation and racial animus is approved by their governments and institutions, maybe that stain begins to fade. Maybe.

And even though the shame of how I behaved remains, I am not ashamed of being from the South. Many of the better examples of American culture come from the South. The music I love, the food, the literature, the seemingly genetic predisposition to gothic humor ... this is the bounty of Southern heritage. The Civil Rights Movement started in the South and rippled out across the country to force people in other regions to grapple with the institutional racism manifested in those places. There's plenty to be proud of. This is the heritage — shared across race and class lines — that we can celebrate. And we can do it just fine without that miserable battle rag or statues of oh-so-polite gentlemen who fought for the right own another human being.²⁰

I am a racist. Chances are, you are, too. The good news is that it is probably not your fault. The hard news: It's still your damned responsibility.

Own it. And make amends.

²⁰ <https://bittersoutherner.com/folklore-project/i-am-a-racist-charlottesville>

Working the Step

1. What reservations do I have about working my fifth step?
2. After working through the fourth step questions, what do you realize about your limitations and capabilities?
3. Can I identify, acknowledge and accept the exact nature of my wrongs?
4. Do I believe that working my fifth step will make my life better? How?
5. List people that you can think of that you might share your story with. Write whether you think that they are a safe, risky or a bad
6. Did I set a time and place for my fifth step? When and where?
7. Has my relationship with a higher power changed as a result of working the fifth step?
8. Describe your feelings and expectations about sharing your fifth step with your sponsor.
9. How has my view of myself changed after working step five?
10. Did I forget or you omit anything?
11. If I am still clinging to something that doesn't work, am I willing to ask for help in letting it go?

Step Six

*Were entirely ready to have
God remove all of
these defects of character.*

Introduction

“Step Six requires us to stop struggling. It is time to acknowledge that we need help. Not only help to stop our *racism* but help in living better lives. Having gone through Steps Four and Five, we become aware of our defects of character. Perhaps pride and thoughts of superiority are blocking the way to serenity. Or it may be the habit of judging others. Perhaps it is a deep resentment, envy, or self-pity that keeps us in turmoil.

It is good to read Step Six over and over. It is brief and to the point. All it requires is *becoming ready to become willing*. We don't have to achieve change immediately. We can work on our attitude of mind and pray about it. We can think it over and see that our lives can become more trouble-free when we rid ourselves of destructive habits. Step Six tells us to relax. We don't do it all alone. Reflect. We turn to our Higher Power with confidence. Think of the relief that is waiting once we become entirely ready. It's like heading into a hot shower after working at a grubby chore. Feeling the dirt wash away is great. We emerge refreshed and shining and ready to deal with whatever comes our way. We affirm to our Higher Power that we are ready to have God remove our defects.”

Step Six is a special type of surrender. It is a spiritual surrender. A spiritual sense is necessary to truly recover from our racist beliefs, thoughts, attitudes and behaviors. A spiritual surrender is not a passive, waiting surrender, but an active use of the will; a total surrender of mind (thinking) and body (doing).²¹

According to Richard Rohr, Step 6 “says that we must first fully own and admit that we have “defects of character,” but then equally, step back and do nothing about it, as it were, until we are “entirely ready” to let God do the job! This really shows high-level spiritual consciousness.”²²

²¹ P., Bill. Drop the Rock: Removing Character Defects - Steps Six and Seven (p. 2). Hazelden Publishing. Kindle Edition.

²² Rohr, Richard. Breathing Under Water: Spirituality and the Twelve Steps . St. Anthony Messenger Press. Kindle Edition. page

*“When you have compassion and surrender to your own heart,
you are surrendering to the hidden power in your heart, God.*

*You are surrendering to love, because God is Love,
the cohesive force of the universe that connects us all.”*

~ Sara Paddison

Step Stories

Mass for Forgiveness of the Sin of Racism.

Racism is not overcome, however, by our own human determination. It is overcome by God, by His mercy. It is not our achievement. We have a key part to play, in cooperation with His grace, but only God can change minds and hearts. That's why the Sacraments of Confession and the Eucharist play such vital roles in overcoming the sin of racism.

The prodigal son, when he finally came to his senses and saw how his own selfishness had ruined his life, told his father (Lk 15:18f), "Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I no longer deserve to be called your son..." By God's grace, he came to see how great was his need for God.

Racism is overcome by God's forgiveness; and it is expressed in words like those we say together at Mass at the beginning of Mass, "I confess to Almighty God and to you, my brothers and Sisters, that I have sinned..." Later in Mass, just before receiving Holy Communion, the priest says as He holds up the Sacred Eucharist: "Behold, the Lamb of God! Behold Him who takes away the sins of the world. Blessed are those called to the supper of the Lamb." Then, we all respond, "Lord, I am not worthy that you should enter under my roof; but only say the word and my soul shall be healed."

Pope John Paul II, in his first message after would-be assassin Ali Agca tried to kill him in May 1981, said, "For more than 30 years, I have had the privilege to serve Jesus as a priest; now I thank Him for allowing me to serve Him as a victim." He also said, "With all my heart, I forgive my brother who tried to take my life."

As Jesus was dying on the Cross, in addition to praying with Psalm 22, "My God, my God, why have you abandoned me;" also said (Lk 23:34), "Father, forgive them, they know not what they do." And when one of the criminals dying on the cross beside Him, said (Lk 23:42), "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom;" Jesus replied, "Amen, I say to you, today you will be with me in Paradise." The rich mercy of God restores human dignity, even to the most hardened of sinners, if we have the humility to say six words: "I am sorry. Please forgive me."

On March 12, 2000, Pope John Paul II, at a Mass of the First Sunday of Lent of the 21st century, in St. Peter's Basilica in Rome, led the whole Church in a Day of Pardon, in which he asked the entire Church to place itself "before Christ, who out of love, took our guilt upon Himself", and to make a "profound examination of conscience," and to "forgive and ask forgiveness!" Inspired by the example of St. John Paul II, let us beg the Lord Jesus, at this Mass, for the grace we need to overcome the evil of racism and to

build a society of Jesus and solidarity. O merciful Savior, we ask for your help that prejudice and animosity will no longer infect our minds or poison our hearts but will be replaced with a love that respects the dignity of every human person.²³

²³ The Most Rev. Thomas J. Olmsted, *Father, Forgive the Sin of Racism*
<https://dphx.org/father-forgive-the-sin-of-racism/>

Confessing My Racism

How can Christians seek racial reconciliation, justice and healing? Attempting to answer that question means reckoning with racism. But as a member of the ethnic group that has enjoyed disproportionate power and privilege because of systemic and other forms of racism, attempting an answer means trying to address a blind spot that afflicts my own vision.

Far easier to point out the comparatively more obvious blind spot of another person's racism — be it Donald Sterling, Paula Deen or commentators on Jeremy Lin. But insofar as we can call racism a blind spot (by which I don't in any way mean to absolve people of responsibility), Jesus taught a very different process for correction: start with your own sin.

Confession raises all sorts of fears, but racism has become one of the most shameful sins I can think of. I didn't realize I saw it that way until one day about 10 years ago, when various slurs started coming to mind as I walked down a street in my neighborhood and saw people of different ethnic backgrounds.

As someone with relatives and close friends of various ethnicities, I was horrified by my own thoughts. Each time it happened, I begged God for forgiveness and a change in heart. At first, I hoped God and I could work it out privately. But you can't address something as long as you pretend it isn't there. And racism causes inherently communal destruction. So I confessed my thoughts to others at church and asked for their prayers. The thoughts continued.

Then, shortly after I moved to California, my then-roommate invited an African American pastor over to pray with her. After they finished, something prompted me to confess my struggle with racist thoughts.

When the pastor asked for more background, I reluctantly shared a hurtful experience that happened around the time the thoughts began. I'm not sure what I expected her to say, but to my astonishment, she said, "Oh, no one ever apologized to you" — and then proceeded to do so herself.

Nothing had prepared me for a response like that. Everything in me resisted the admission, fearing that exposure of my sin at its worst would lead to relational disaster and rejection. Even seemingly lesser sins — ignorant, careless or inadvertently hurtful remarks — had previously damaged relationships and caused others to pull back in hurt and anger. So I was ready for what I thought I deserved.

But instead *she* was apologizing to *me*?

That woman's response was one of the most humbling and powerful experiences I've ever had with someone of another race. Though she apologized on behalf of others, her response also offered a measure of the forgiveness I desperately needed. In that moment, she embodied the hope of the coming racial unity Paul describes in Ephesians:

"[Jesus] himself is our peace, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, by abolishing in his flesh the law with its commandments and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new man out of the two, thus making peace, and in this one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility." (Eph. 2:14-16, NIV)

I wish my racist thoughts ended with that conversation, but it hasn't been so easy. So, recently, I decided to spend some time in listening prayer about racism. With the listening process my church follows, you ask God to take you back to where a particular issue began, showing you both the lies you believed and the truth about the situation. Later, you renounce your belief in those lies and, if necessary, walk through a similar process for unforgiveness, verbally releasing the other person from his or her debt.

To my chagrin, several old wounds came up again. I may never fully know the connection between those events and my thoughts, but I realized during my prayer time how many small hurts — especially with strangers — I'd left to fester quietly. And small as they might seem, each of those unforgiven wounds both damages my relationships and keeps me from God.²⁴

²⁴ Anna Broadway, *Confessing My Racism: How forgiveness could transform us all*. <https://www.christianitytoday.com/amyjuliabecker/2014/august/confessing-my-racism.html>

Working the Step

1. Describe any situations or events that have filled you with pride. What have these events and emotions brought into your life that you like and/or enjoy? Adversely, what problems have these events or emotions caused you?
2. Describe any situations or events where you have been greedy or materialistic. What have these events and emotions brought into your life that you like and/or enjoy? Have you experienced any problems due to your actions?
3. Describe any situations or events where you have given into lust without the regard for others or any morality. What have these events and emotions brought into your life that you like or enjoy? Have these events or emotions caused you any problems? Are you ready to hand these events or situations over to the care of God?
4. Continue the descriptions listed above for dishonesty, excessive eating, drinking, or shopping, situations or events where you have been envious or jealous of others, and events or situations where you have avoided responsibility for your actions. What have these events brought to your life that you like or enjoy? What problems have occurred because of these events or situations?
5. Aside from your addictive behavior, what other activities do you really enjoy?
6. After going over your Step Four inventory and describing the events or situations above, list your major defects of character:
7. What do you plan to do to change the major defects of character? List each defect individually with a proposed preventative behavior. How will you allow your higher power to help you in your battle against these character defects?

Step Seven

“Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.”

Introduction²⁵

Step Seven is about getting rid of character defects and replacing them by practicing humility & spiritual principles. Working on the seventh step requires constant thoughtfulness and commitment to being honest, courageous and humble.

When working on steps four and five we discovered our assets and our shortcomings. With step 6 we became prepared to deal with these qualities so that in step 7 we could be ready to act – to humbly ask our higher power to remove these shortcomings.

“We cannot tell what may happen to us in the strange medley of life. But we can decide what happens IN us – how we can take it, what we do with it – and that is what really counts in the end.” – Joseph Fort Newton

In step seven, we seek “progress not perfection.” Humbly asking that your shortcoming be removed is not a guarantee AND requires that you participate with your higher power in this process. Some of our shortcomings will stick with us despite our best efforts, and plenty are returned- free of charge- any time we choose to re-engage with them.

We can measure our progress in recovery from racist attitudes and behaviors in our relations with those who have been impacted by these attitudes and behaviors, instead of measuring ourselves against other people. We can take stock of our own journey, acknowledge our strengths and use them with humility, seeking only for an honest way of living in an anti-racist reality.

Deep and lasting change comes slowly, and no one lets go of shortcomings all at once. However, they do disappear as we become aware of them and take action, one at a time, one day at a time.

²⁵ <https://www.jasonwahler.com/12-steps-of-aa/step-seven-of-aa-alcoholics-anonymous>

Step Stories

Lament ²⁶

God, *I* lament the damage that *my* silence in the face of racial violence has done, for the sins of racism that run through *my life* like so many threads in a cloth. Forgive *me* for the times *I* have given in to *my* discomfort, for the times I have forgotten my own privilege and failed to stand with my black siblings.

Help me as I experience white privilege every day remember that, with my privilege, I am imbued with the responsibility to challenge and hold one another accountable. Give me the courage to educate myself, to listen well, and to use my voice when it is most needed.

²⁶ <https://www.mennoniteusa.org/menno-snapshots/lament-violence-of-racism/>

Breathe on me²⁷

Battered, Broken, Betrayed.
I stand Before you
Between the lines
Breathe on me Breath of God
Because I have Betrayed
My Brother and sister
By my silence
Breathe on me Breath of God
But what is Breath
when it is stolen
Humanity Beyond recognition
Buried in Blood
Bring us transformation
Beauty for Brokenness
Expose me for my blindness
Breathe on me the breath to see
Be Brave and Bold
Beyond what others can see
So when I can't Breathe
God Breathe on me
When I cannot see my Betrayal
Bring me to the light
I Beg for the wisdom to Be Better
Bless me with the strength
to never stop Becoming
Beyond the patience to listen
Bring me into action
I can't Breathe
So God, Breathe through me

²⁷ <https://www.mennoniteusa.org/menno-snapshots/lament-violence-of-racism/>

Working the Step

1. How has my understanding of my higher power grown?
2. How have the previous six steps prepared me for step seven?
3. How does being aware of my own humility help when working the seventh step?
4. How do I plan to ask a God of my understanding or higher power to remove my shortcomings?
5. How does the spiritual principle of “surrender” work for me in step seven?
6. Am I comfortable with prayer and meditation- even if it means making up my own?
7. Has my sense of perspective or “reality” been out of proportion lately?
8. Have there been times when I have been able to stop from acting on a character defect and practice a spiritual principle instead?
9. Are there any shortcomings that have been removed from my life or at least diminished in their power over me?

Step Eight

*Made a list of all persons
we had harmed and became
willing to make amends to them all.*

Introduction –

In step eight we are given a new task to perform and specific direction for approaching the recovery work needed. Our specific assignment is to make a list of persons we have harmed. The second part of Step Eight challenges us to become willing to make amends.²⁸

Accepting this discipline will complete honesty may have caused us some pain. However, we found the result well worth it, for it presented the opportunity for us to have a clear conscience and gain a better understanding of ourselves. Taking this Step helped us begin to free ourselves of guilt. Although the guilt may have been deeply hidden in our subconscious. Step Eight gave us courage to bring it into the daylight. Later we could do whatever we felt necessary to free ourselves from the pain inflicted by our past actions. By doing our courageous best with this Step, we began to feel more comfortable with ourselves and with others.²⁹

In step eight we may get an inner prompting to return to step four to review our character defects. However, this step focuses on the individuals we may have harmed as a result of character defects, character assets and the nature of the resulting actions (step 5).

Many of our racist acts may not be conscious or overt. They may be micro-aggressive in nature. “Microaggressions are defined as the everyday, subtle, intentional — and oftentimes unintentional interactions or behaviors that communicate some sort of bias toward historically marginalized groups.

²⁸ Paths to Recovery Al-Alnon’s Steps, Traditions, and Concepts – page 81

²⁹ Alanon’s Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions (2005), page 49

Some examples of racial microaggression include³⁰

- 'You're so articulate' or 'You don't sound black.'
- 'Don't blame me. I never owned slaves.'
- 'White privilege doesn't exist.'
- 'All lives matter.'
- 'I'm not racist. I have a black friend.'
- 'Can I touch your hair?'
- 'I'm colorblind.' or 'When I look at you, I don't see color.'
- Clutching your purse, dodging while passing a black man or unnecessarily calling the police.
- Calling a black woman or man 'sister' or 'brother,' respectively

We're all human beings who are prone to mistakes, and we're all human beings who might commit microaggressions. And it's not necessarily that you're a bad person if you commit a microaggression, but rather that you need to be more aware of your biases and impact on people. We all need to commit to working on these things in order to create a more harmonious society.”³¹

*“Trust in the LORD with all your heart,
and do not lean on your own understanding.
In all your ways acknowledge him,
and he will make straight your paths.”
Proverbs 3:5-6*

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<https://www.cnn.com/2020/06/05/health/racial-microaggressions-examples-responses-wellness/index.html>

31

<https://www.npr.org/sections/health-shots/2017/11/11/562623815/scientists-start-to-tease-out-the-subtler-ways-racism-hurts-health>

Step Stories

Nagging Memories of Childhood

Since childhood I have been nagged by those moments when I said or did something that brought pain to another person. These are ugly memories that I never believed would go away. With Step Eight, however, I discover a means to release myself from unrelenting guilt.

This Step says to make a list of all people I have harmed and to become willing to make amends to them all. Finally, I can put down in words all the memories and all the pain. When I see them written in front of me, they seem almost manageable, and I feel hopeful about freeing myself from their weight as I become willing to make amends. I need not take any further action at this point. All I am concerned with now is the harm I have caused others, the guilt I have brought on myself, and the desire to do what I can to clear it all away. Today's Reminder Guilt is a burden that keeps me from giving myself fully and freely to the present. I can begin to rid my mind of guilt by quietly admitting where and when I have done wrong to people, including myself.³²

*“After you hear and listen.
First must come desire.
Second must come willingness.
Third should come understanding.
Fourth should come progression and
with progression will come more understanding.”
— Hyrum Yeakley*

³² Family Groups, Al-Anon. *Courage to Change—One Day at a Time in AlAnon II* (pp. 246-247). Al-Anon Family Groups. Kindle Edition.

Working the Step

1. Have I resisted making a list? If so, why?
2. Did I use my Fourth Step as a tool in preparing my list? How?
3. How have I used rationalization or justification to block me from becoming willing?
4. Am I willing to make amends? If no, why not? If yes, am I willing to write about my experience
5. Do I understand that willingness is different than making the actual amends? Describe the differences.
6. In reviewing my list, is there a pattern reflecting new defects in my character? Can I see how those defects harmed those on my list? Is this a pattern I identified in working Steps Five and Six?
7. As I work Step Eight, How do I envision it helping me in my relationship with those of another race? My family and friends? My extended family?

Step Nine

*Made direct amends to such people wherever possible,
except when to do so would injure them or others.*

Introduction³³ –

When you make it to step 8 and 9 of this 12-Step Program, you should take a moment to reflect on how far you've already come. These steps are challenging emotionally because you may feel guilty when you look back on your behavior. These steps are not about feeling badly for yourself and you'll be well equipped to deal with what arises in you. Step 8 is the beginning of making amends for the things you did when you were living as an unconscious and ill-informed racist. You make a list of the people that you harmed and put yourself in the space of being willing to make amends to those people.

In step 9, you will then begin to make those amends to the people on the list. First, reflect on where you started and where you are now. You should feel proud that you've made it to where you are. You can now work to improve your life because you've had the breakthroughs to get you to the steps 8 and 9.

Amends is compensation for a loss, damage, or injury of any kind. There are steps you take to make amends, which include:

- Take stock of the damage you caused.
- Express the desire to repair it.
- Admit to your mistakes.
- Find a way to repair the damage.
- Be patient about getting someone's trust back.

For most people working a sincere recovery process, we come to realize that as long as life is centered completely on our own wants and needs, it feels very isolated and unfulfilling. In doing the work called for when making amends, we gain perspective on how our actions affect others.

Working step 8 and 9 puts you in touch with your own humanity again. You begin to feel empathy and compassion for the people you have hurt as the result of your racism. It makes you more **mindful** of your place in the world.

³³ <https://www.evergreendrugrehab.com/blog/step-8-9-work-making-amends-meaning/>

It is suggested that we make direct amends to people whenever possible. What does that mean? There are three kinds of amends:³⁴

Direct Amends – taking personal responsibility for your actions and confronting the person who you would like to reconcile with.

Indirect Amends – finding ways to repair damage that cannot be reversed or undone by doing things like volunteering and helping others.

Living Amends – when you show others as well as yourself that you have made a genuine lifestyle change and are making a commitment to yourself and those that you have hurt that you will & have discarded your previous destructive behaviors.

³⁴ <https://www.jasonwahler.com/12-steps-of-aa/step-nine-of-aa-alcoholics-anonymous>

Step Stories

Did I say that?³⁵

As soon as you recognize that whatever came out of your mouth was problematic, apologize right away, said Joan Williams, University of California, Hastings College of the Law distinguished professor. Williams advised saying the following: "Wow, I just heard what I said. I apologize." Don't say

- "Sorry I offended you"
- "I'm sorry that I offended you, but that wasn't my intent."
- "Sorry, it was just a joke!"

Apologizing for offending someone is an attempt to validate your own comment by implying that the other person just reacted poorly. *Apologize for your actions being offensive*

³⁵ <https://www.businessinsider.com/how-to-apologize-at-work-microaggression-2018-7>

Lessons I learned from being called out for micro-aggression³⁶

If you've been called out for committing a microaggression you need to respond with compassion, concern, and humility. "You want people to feel respected, so you need to walk the talk. It's important to get this right." Here are some tips.

Take a breath

Being called out for a microaggression does not feel good. You may experience a range of emotions — "stress, embarrassment, defensiveness, and your heart rate may even go up. This is normal. But do not let these sensations rule how you react. Calm yourself. Understand that while you may have made a mistake, it doesn't mean you're a bad person.

There's an upside to being called out for a microaggression: It's an indication of trust. The person who labeled your comment believes that you can be better. "If they don't think you're capable of, or interested in, evolving they would not have wasted their breath."

Don't make it about you.

While being called out for a microaggression may be awkward and uncomfortable, you don't want to get defensive. You must not make it about you. When a human being tells you that **they have been harmed by your words or actions**, you need to focus on the injured party. It can be helpful to remember that every callout has an entire history's worth of unsaid context behind it. When someone says, 'What you said hurt me,' they're saying, 'You have hurt me in the way that people have hurt me, and people like me, in the past.'" In other words, your remark was not "just one interpersonal interaction." Rather it carried centuries' worth of discrimination, cruelty, and oppression. And the weight of historical oppression is very heavy.

³⁶ <https://hbr.org/2020/07/youve-been-called-out-for-a-microaggression-what-do-you-do>

Listen.

Your first priority is to **make sure the other person feels heard**. As difficult as it may be to receive the criticism, “they are taking a risk by putting themselves on the line.” Listen to what they say with an open heart and an open mind. Be grateful. It is a deeply sacred gift for someone to reflect back to you how you’re showing up in the world and to help you become more evolved. Express appreciation, and then follow the other person’s lead. Sometimes the individual calling you out may want to explain to you all the ways that what you said was harmful and give you a history lesson to go along with it. Other times, all they may reveal is, “Don’t say that word.”

Sincerely apologize and don’t overdo it.

Upon being called out for an offensive remark, some people have a tendency to over-apologize. “They go on and on, saying things like: ‘I am so sorry. I feel so terrible. I am not a racist. What must you think of me?’” But these histrionics do not help, and in fact, they contribute to the insult. “You are flexing your power by [asking] this employee to take care of you. The person you have offended is not responsible for assuaging your guilt, and make you feel better about the situation. This shouldn’t become “a pity party.”

*“Humility leads to strength and not to weakness.
It is the highest form of self-respect to admit
mistakes and make amends for them.”— John. J. McCloy*

Working the Step

1. How is 'making amends' committing to a continuous process of change?
2. Do I have fears about making amends? Am I worried that someone will take revenge or reject me?
3. How does the Ninth Step require a new level of surrender to the program?
4. Why doesn't it matter how my amends are received?
5. Which names on my Eighth Step list are complicated by circumstances? Do I owe any amends that might have serious consequences if I made them? What are they?
6. What behaviors do I need to amend?
7. What are my immediate plans for making amends to myself? Do I have any long-range goals that might also fit as amends to myself? What are they? What can I do to follow through?
8. Have I accepted responsibility for the harm I caused and for repairing that harm?
9. What experiences have I had that led me to see the harm I caused more clearly? How has that contributed to an increase in my humility?
10. What are the benefits to me of practicing the principle of forgiveness? What are some situations in which I've been able to practice this principle?

Step Ten

“We continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.”

Introduction

Continuing to do anything in our daily lives usually means that we get better at it. And so it goes with Step Ten. Nobody ever really enjoys admitting to being wrong, it's much easier to blame others. Admitting when we are wrong and promptly being accountable for our side of the street is absolutely necessary in order for us to maintain our spiritual progress in recovery. **The best part about practicing the Tenth Step in our daily lives is that the more we are exercising self-discovery, honesty, humility and reflection, the less apologies and amends we have to make!**

Continuing to take personal inventory isn't *only* about finding out when we are wrong however, because we can't identify the times when we are wrong, unless we also have identified the times when we have handled things “rightly” as a basis for a comparison. Working with a sponsor in Step 10 to identify the times and situations when we do things right really helps us to form a personal value system. This is as much a part of taking a personal inventory as is identifying our liabilities.

Step Stories

An Amend, Not an Apology ³⁷

What is an amend? The technical answer is an amend is a change.

An amend is not an apology. It is a clear and purposeful act designed to clear up a problem from the past.

If I harmed someone, and then in the course of working the steps reach a point to make an amend, it is my duty to sit down with the person and explain fully about intentional and unintentional racism my own personal program, what my fears were, and how I have changed as a human being.

If I owe something material, I pay it back, with interest if necessary. If what I owe cannot be measured in gold or other material substance, then I must humbly ask for forgiveness for my indiscretions and go my way. (What price is there for hurt feelings?)

³⁷ <https://www.verywellmind.com/a-study-of-step-9-69407>

A Healing Opportunity ³⁸

When I first experienced Step 9, I made amends because I finally saw things differently, and saw my part in the hurts I had caused and wanted to confess to them so I could feel better and let go of the guilt I had with this new awareness.

This was a good start for me but there were still a lot of "I's" as I experienced this step. As with all the steps I have found for me, that as time moves on they reveal more and more to me. I have found that there is so much spiritual depth to them. The more I practiced this step the more I found out how much healing comes from it and not just for me.

As in many harms done, I found that it just wasn't "I" who had it all twisted up. In opening up some past wrongs and in making those amends, many dear and wonderful people have also received healing, an understanding and answers to stuff they were holding on to for far too long. The truth also set them free.

So when I become aware of an injury I have caused another person, I gladly bear my soul of my wrong-doing so that the other person doesn't have to carry around any excess garbage, twist their mind over and over again trying to make sense from the Mack truck that just ran them over. How blessed we are to become free from our past, and given the gift to help free another.

³⁸ <https://www.verywellmind.com/a-study-of-step-9-69407>

Working the Step

1. Are there times in my life when I am confused about the difference between my feelings and my actions? Write about this.
2. Have there been some times in my recovery when I've been wrong and not aware of it until later? What were they?
3. How do my "wrongs" affect my own life? Others' lives?
4. Why is a Tenth Step even necessary? What is the purpose of continuing to take personal inventory?
5. What does promptly admitting you were wrong mean- to you?
6. Have there been situations in my recovery in which I felt uncomfortable about acknowledging something I had done well (or "right")? Describe.
7. How does the Tenth Step help me live in the present and why is that helpful?
8. What am I doing differently as a result of working Step Ten?

Step Eleven

*Sought through prayer and meditation
to improve our conscious contact with God as we understood Him,
praying only for knowledge of His will for us
and the power to carry that out.*

Introduction

What is prayer? What is meditation? How are they different? An important note to make is that this Step guides us with the words "prayer and meditation", not "prayer or meditation".

To some, prayer is seen as a religious act of placing one's hands together, getting on one's knees and talking to God. There are various prayers such as the Serenity Prayer, The Lord's Prayer or "not my will, but thine be done". Some pray every morning or evening; some pray throughout the day. Reading the prayers found in [The Daily Prayer app](#), [Book of Common Worship- Daily Prayer](#) or many or prayer resources available. Writing letters to God works, too. We learn to pray from example and from other's personal experience. Accepting God's will and God's time can mean saying a prayer and letting go

Improving or making a conscious contact with God is not always simple and at times the path may seem rocky or uneven. Even after years of meditating and praying, most of us, at one time or another, find ourselves in a place of frustration or discontent. By using Step Ten, we can usually identify challenges that are blocking us from successful prayer or meditation. We may find that we are back to exerting our own will. Being gentle with ourselves and remembering that we are human beings on a spiritual path with twists and turns is helpful. As we say in our Suggested RA Closing, "We aren't perfect." We learn not to be too hard on ourselves and discover, much to our relief, that our loving Higher Power waits patiently for a renewed contact.

The second part of Step Eleven, ". . . praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the "power to carry that out," focuses our prayers in a specific direction – God's, not ours. Asking only for God's will means surrendering our own. Working previous Steps has helped us to become willing. Before starting our RA recovery some of us accepted unacceptable behavior in others, believing we were doing God's will. Despite sincere efforts, we are not always able to separate God's will from own, but we can strive for improvement. When we make a mistake, we learn from it and continue to grow – "One Day at a Time".

Seeking, prayer, meditation, improvement conscious contact, understanding, knowledge, His will and power are all the gifts of Step Eleven. With newfound energy we are learning to follow God's will. Our faith and competence grow daily as we pray and meditate.³⁹

*Show me Your ways
That I may walk with You
Show me Your ways
I put my hope in You*

*The cry of my heart
Is to love You more
To live with the
Touch of Your hand
Stronger each day
Show me Your ways⁴⁰*

- Show me your ways by Hillsong

³⁹ Paths to Recovery – Al-Anon's Steps, Traditions, and Concepts, page 112- 113

⁴⁰ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yDKappAASZM>

Step Stories

We Are Special

I broke Step Eleven into four parts. Prayer is talking with God about what His will is for me. Meditation is quietly listening and focusing on the Power of God that is inside of me. Conscious contact is making myself deeply aware of God's presence. Knowledge and power are when I stop giving directions and start listening for God's will. In this way, I develop a deeper relationship with God. I can feel His strength, wisdom, peace, and love.

His will with love, humility, dignity, kindness and sometimes even humor. My prayer is that everyone will find a Higher Power's love, strength, wisdom, and understanding. I pray that everyone finds unconditional love on the way to loving themselves. Ma all know that we are special and that we are children of God. ⁴¹

⁴¹ Paths to Recovery – Al-Anon's Steps, Traditions, and Concepts, page

Spiritual Homecoming through Conscious Contact⁴²

We have worked our way through all of the Steps learning to apply the 11th Step Meditation approach through each of the steps. We have learned that we suffer from a spiritual disease and we must learn to constantly turn our attention to God and away from ourselves if we are to learn to live a new life. We strive to be detached from our *EGO* and to express our *Spirit*.

To live a spiritual life is very different from the life that we have learned and practiced our entire time up until this moment. This new way of living does not happen without resistance from our *EGO*. We will find all kinds of distractions and excuses why we should not or cannot take the actions to lead a spiritual life. Persistence and patience are keywords as we strive to create and maintain a conscious contact with our Higher Power. We have learned and practiced concentration and meditation techniques that provide us with the tools and the foundation to continue building our 11th Step approach to life. Because we have practiced developing our 11th step understanding, throughout each of the steps, we have slowly expanded our knowledge of the spiritual actions and concepts of each of the steps with meditations to help express these spiritual qualities within us and outwardly in our lives. Now is the moment to see what the Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous suggests about working 11th Step.

Step Eleven - Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understood Him, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out.

Prayer and meditation for me are two companion practices. Two tools to use to connect to my Higher Power. They are not separate in their intent or practice, but may be different in intensity, concentration and in length. The founders of our programs were primarily from Christian backgrounds. I appreciate and relate to the ancient Aramaic language translation for the word "prayer" which 2000 years ago meant "to open oneself" and "to listen to the Divine Presence."

To me "conscious contact" relates to the quality of the moment to moment relationship I'm having with my Higher Power. Every moment I have a 3rd Step decision to make - do I take the well-worn path of my old habits, the path of my defective habits, or , do I take

⁴²

<https://myemail.constantcontact.com/November-11th-Step-Meditation-Explorations.html?soid=1101648936536&aid=4kFHx6LmtA0>

the new, less traveled path toward Higher Power, love and a new way of living? When I am in closer "conscious contact," more connected, I make the decision toward Higher Power more easily and more often.

Working the Step

1. How do I define the difference between prayer and meditation? Can I talk to another RA member about the difference?
2. Am I willing to try prayer and meditation today?
3. What can I do to add prayer and meditation to my life today?
4. What personal spiritual experiences can I draw on to help me improve my conscious contact with Higher Power?
5. What does it mean to me to pray only for God's will and not my own? Who can I distinguish between God's will and my self-will?
6. How have I been mistaken about Gods will? How has my self-will caused me difficulties?
7. Is something blocking me in this Step today? What is it? What Steps can I review to help me feel connected again?
8. What do I need to have the power to carry out God's will for me? Have I asked God for that power?

Step Twelve

"Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to alcoholics and to practice these principles in all our affairs."

Introduction

The last of the 12 Steps to carry the message to others and to put the principles of the program into practice in every area of your life. For those in recovery programs, practicing Step 12 is simply "how it works," as the founders of the fellowship discovered for themselves in those early days.

As the history of AA so clearly indicates, it was working with others who were still suffering that kept Bill W. and Dr. Bob in recovery. The same principle is true for all members of 12 step groups: "to keep it you have to give it away."⁴³

Step 12 also calls for members to put the spiritual growth they have found to work—not only within the fellowship but it all aspects of their lives. It requires practicing these principles in all your affairs.

This too is doing 12th step "work" and makes the program work as one of attraction and not promotion. For many in the 12-step fellowships, working the 12th step is simply how it works.

Step 12 allows people who have worked the program to work with others who are still struggling, which benefits both the person in recovery as well as those who are still going through the program. Being of service to others can:⁴⁴

- Remind you of the early days of recovery (and why you've worked so hard to move past that phase)
- Keep you accountable and prevent you from becoming complacent in your recovery
- Give you a sense of purpose
- Enhance your fellowship with others
- Inspire someone else to stay the sober path

⁴³ <https://www.verywellmind.com/a-study-of-step-12-69412>

⁴⁴ <https://www.verywellmind.com/a-study-of-step-12-69412>

- Help provide insight to someone else in recovery
- Allow you to become a trustworthy person for someone in recovery

As you go through the 12 steps, remember that racist recovery is a lifelong journey that requires work and dedication. Working step 12 is a way to safeguard your own recovery as you help others live a better, anti-racist life one day at a time.

When we have had a spiritual awakening as a result of our efforts we are finally able to do, feel, and believe that which we could not do before. This gift, which is a new state of consciousness and being, is really the icing on the cake of sobriety.

On a daily basis we have the opportunity to put into practice things that we are finally in possession of: a degree of honesty, tolerance, unselfishness, peace of mind, and love. Practicing the 12 steps in all our affairs, trusting a higher power, cleaning house, sharing our experience strength and hope, staying active in service one day at a time, for the rest of our life...is like eating cake, with icing, every day.

Step Stories

Spiritual awakening

The 12-step process opened me to receive the healing grace of God. It had to be a power greater than myself that healed me. If I had not accepted the fact that I couldn't do it myself (Step 1) I would not have embarked on the mountain of work that needed to be done to put myself in a position to receive the miracle. The first paradox of the program: accepting powerlessness empowers.

“We found the Great Reality deep down within us. In the last analysis, it is only there that He may be found.”

That was the sentence on page 55 of the Big Book. When I read it in my first or second month in the Program 35 years ago, it was meaningless to this hardcore, bitter, angry atheist. It took years and years – often acting-as-if – for me to truly FEEL it. There's another quote on page 106 of the AA 12&12 that I read 35 years ago that was also meaningless to me at the time.

“When a man or a woman has a spiritual awakening, the most important meaning of it is that he has now become able to do, feel, and believe that which he could not do before on his unaided strength and resources alone. He has been granted a gift which amounts to a new state of consciousness and being. He has been set on a path which tells him he is really going somewhere, that life is not a dead end, not something to be endured or mastered. In a very real sense he has been transformed, because he has laid hold of a source of strength which, in one way or another, he has hitherto denied himself. He finds himself in possession of a degree of honesty, tolerance, unselfishness, peace of mind, and love of which he had thought himself quite incapable. What he has received is a free gift, and yet...he has made himself ready to receive it.

My Spiritual Awakening

1. A spiritual awakening for me was a new awareness of the God – a force for good – within me, of my spiritual nature, of my inner spiritual power, of an unsuspected inner resource. I tapped into a resource that was there all the time. The things that blocked me from a relationship with that force were my character defects.
2. God is something in me bigger than me. A hidden resource that allows me to be much more than I am.
3. A spiritual awakening is becoming aware of the presence of God within. It is an awareness of connection to the spirit within and all around us. It is feeling and understanding the spiritual laws of the universe.
4. There is clearly a force...a force that wants me to be a living and useful human being and be all that I've been given the ability to be...or all that I can be. It's an unproveable, unseeable but very feelable force. My job as a human being is to do all I can to stay aligned with that force. The program shows me how to do that.
5. The spirit is in us and we are in the spirit. The spirit is all around us – as small as our breath, as large as the universe. Our real life occurs in the spirit within us while our body is moving through its paces. Our objective is alignment of our soul, spirit and behavior. Therein lies peace. Alignment is being who God intended us to be.
6. Conscious contact is bringing into my conscious awareness the presence of the spirit within, the Quiet Inner Voice (Quiet Inner Spirit, Quiet Inner Presence) that can guide, strengthen and calm. It is a force for good resident in my soul. It is always at work inside me.
7. God is the feeling of courage I feel when I need to deal with difficult things. God is the feeling of compassion I feel for the still suffering. God is the feeling of gratitude when I'm able to help someone help themselves. God is the feeling of connection that I sometimes get in meditation or sometimes sitting or walking quietly in the forest.
8. Many people share many synonyms before finally deciding to use the word God: Spirit of the universe; Spirit within; Spirit of life; Spirit of the group; Spirit of truth, goodness and love; Spirit of life within: energy, feelings of love, wisdom; inspiration, creator of hope; Quiet inner voice; Wisdom of my soul; Inner spiritual light within all people; Inner guide; Our deepest consciousness; Divine order; Divine order behind the seeming disorder; Divine principle of the Universe; Divine creator; The great unknown; Force for good underlying all things; How

things work; Un-seeable spirit that connects all living things; Composite of all good; The glue that holds it all together; Spiritual Laws; Patterns of Reality; The way things work; First cause; A river of goodwill flowing between us; Good orderly direction; Great Out Doors; Wisdom of the ages; The whole of creation; Love and service.

9. The way God sometimes seems to work: I pray for strength and He (I use "He" because it's easier) gives me difficulties to overcome which make me strong; I pray for wisdom and He gives me problems to solve which bring me wisdom; I pray for prosperity and He gives me brains and brawn with which to work. I pray for courage and He gives me dangers to overcome which give me courage; I ask for favors and He gives me opportunities. He/She/It is definitely not Santa Claus.

Practice these principles

Principles in all our affairs means every minute of every day in all aspects of our life. You have probably heard the line that if you can't, for whatever reason, practice these principles in all your affairs you need to change your affairs. We need to apply these principles to all parts of our daily living.

1. Honesty. Practice honesty in all aspects of my life, particularly self-honesty. Accept that I'm not truly in control of anything except my own priorities, attitudes and actions. God's in charge of outcomes; I'm in charge of action.
2. Hope. Cultivate an attitude of hope and positive thinking rather than gloominess and negativity and faultfinding. Expect the best, not the worst.
3. Surrender. Leave tomorrow to God, but do today what I think He would have me do to prepare for tomorrow. Have faith that God will give me what I need to deal with whatever life brings.
4. Courage. Face and deal with life as it is, not as I wish it were or think it ought to be. Courage is not the absence of fear; it's doing it anyway.
5. Integrity. Be open be who I am, be part of the world. Be my true self. No hiding out. Let my behavior match my values, i.e., no dissonance between my inside and outside.
6. Willingness. Maintain an open-minded, flexible and accepting attitude toward life, knowing that the only constant in the world is change. Always be willing to learn and change and cooperate with the guidance of my HP.
7. Humility. Be teachable be rightsized, be openminded – no better than, no worse than, a simple child of God. Let go of status seeking, pride, thoughts or actions belittling myself or others, trust God to change me. Wear the world like a loose garment.
8. Love and tolerance. Unconditional love for myself and others. Love and accept others as they are, not as I would wish them to be. Take full responsibility for my actions and my feelings.
9. Responsibility and Perseverance - Perseverance to work at growth every day. Keep on keeping on in all areas of my life. Do not quit.
10. Discipline- Practice self-discipline in my words and actions toward others so as to not hurt them. I have no right to hurt others to soothe my own conscience. Practice forgiveness. Hold no grudges. Give up blaming. A closed mouth gathers no foot.

11. Awareness. Let God be my compass instead of my logic. Cultivate things and people who nourish my soul. It's God who heals, but I have to put myself in a position to receive the miracle.
12. Service. Live a life of service. See what I can put in rather than take out. An attitude of, "How may I be of use." Allow God to serve others through me.

God's will for me has to be abstaining not just from compulsive eating, but also from selfishness, dishonesty, resentment, fear, pride, self-pity,
In my experience, there are many ways of looking at the Racist Anonymous Principles.
the design for living laid out in our 12-Step program.

Service

The second part of the Step is service – passing it on – helping others with racist attitudes and behaviors.

I accepted the idea from the beginning that service wasn't optional – probably because of the sponsor who pounded it into my head. What I learned pretty quickly was some sort of service was a requirement, not a choice. It was part of my racist recovery and being anti-racist. I must pass on the gifts I receive as I practice the Program's design for living.

I break service into two parts. First, one-on-one helping another individual, with or without being called a sponsor. I think this is the type of service that most assures that I hold on and grow. The second part of service is all the many things that need to be done to keep meetings and RA alive. I was told from the beginning I must have some job, no matter what job, in every meeting I went to. I did it. It was part of my recovery.

Yes, I said MUST. I don't use that word very often in Program. I fully appreciate there is no one way of working the Steps. But if there is an exception, this is it. Service is NOT optional. It's the 12th Step. If I don't pass on the gift, I'm not working and living the program and I will lose the gift of freedom from personal and inter-personal racism. Period. I'm 100% positive. I guarantee this.

Whatever gifts I receive from God are meant to be given away, to be passed on to others. If I feel gratitude, I have received some sort of gift. To be clear, a lake must have an inflow and an outflow. Helping others is my outflow.

We don't just carry the message...we are the message. This is a program of attraction. An example is worth a thousand sermons.

Don't be confused about anonymity. I sometimes hear members talking about breaking THEIR anonymity. They're not anonymous. If they don't tell people who may need to know about our program, they're not working the Program. They're not working Step 12 and will eventually lose the gift. If individual members don't pass on the message to the community, OA eventually dies. Where we do maintain our anonymity is at the public media level – Tradition 11. We also do not disclose the membership of other individual members. My favorite place for carrying the message to people I don't know is the gym. I personally devote a great deal of one-on-one time trying to help others who share my disease, as well as many hours in Intergroup, Region and World Service work. I show and tell people who want to hear it how I got my freedom. Willingness, of course, is up to them.

Passing it on doesn't just mean telling and showing people "there is a solution." It also means living love and kindness and usefulness and the other moral principles of 12-Step programs. This behavior is contagious and can spread far and wide. It's a little like paying it forward. Random acts of kindness. An attitude of "How can I be useful."

Working the Step⁴⁵

1. Have you been able to reach out to another recovering racist? If so, describe the situation and how it feels to you.
2. What kind of approach would you like to have had when you first started the program? How can you implement that type of approach in your life to others now?
3. What would you say if someone asked how the 12 Step program has worked for you?
4. How do you usually handle conflict? Do you know of any way to be more effective in conflict resolution? If so, how would you become more effective? What would be the steps?
5. How much time do you want to and are able to allow for working with others on their program? How will you go about setting that time aside?
6. What outside resources can you call on when you need help as a sponsor?
7. How do you know if you are suited to helping another person work a 12 Step program?

⁴⁵ https://12step.org/docs/12step_questions.pdf

12 steps of RAF

Surrender

1. We admitted we were powerless over racism—that our lives had become unmanageable.
2. Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.
3. Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood God.

Moral Inventory / Internal work

4. Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.
5. Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.
6. Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.
7. Humbly asked God to remove our shortcomings.

Amends

8. Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.
9. Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.
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.

Practice the principles /Awakening/ Transformation

12. Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these Steps, we tried to carry this message to others, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

RAF Traditions

(Changes from A.A. program and specific to RAF Indicated in red).

1. Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends upon RAF unity
2. For our group purpose there is but one ultimate authority—a loving God as God may express God’s self in our group conscience. Our leaders are but trusted servants; they do not govern.
3. The only requirement for RAF membership is a desire to stop being racist.
4. Each group should be autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or RAF as a whole.
5. Each group has but one primary purpose—to carry its message to the racist who still suffers.
6. An RAF group ought never endorse, finance, or lend the RAF name to any related facility or outside enterprise, lest problems of money, property, and prestige divert us from our primary purpose.
7. Every RAF group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.
8. Racist Anonymous Fellowship should remain forever nonprofessional, but our fellowship may employ special workers.
9. RAF as such, ought never be organized; but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve.
10. Racist Anonymous Fellowship has no opinion on outside issues; hence the RAF name ought never be drawn into public controversy.
11. Our public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion; we need to always maintain personal anonymity at the level of press, radio, and films.
12. Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our Traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities.

Racist Anonymous Fellowship Principles

HONESTY

We admitted we were powerless over racism—that our lives had become unmanageable.

HOPE

Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.

SURRENDER

Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood God.

COURAGE

Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.

INTEGRITY

Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.

WILLINGNESS

Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.

HUMILITY

Humbly asked God to remove our shortcomings

LOVE

Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.

RESPONSIBILITY

Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.

DISCIPLINE

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

AWARENESS

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.

SERVICE

Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these Steps, we tried to carry this message to others, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

Acknowledgements

*We attend the rallies, we read the books, and have discussed the books with others.
We support the disenfranchised and believe that Black Lives Matter.
We support policies and legislature to help BIPOC and ALL people in need.
Yet, the racism continues. What can I do that will have lasting impact?*

When the idea of eliminating racism within our country, a season 12-stepper suggested treating racism like an addiction from which one can recover. Based on internet research, this is not a novel idea and many have considered this approach.

One such program that we researched and attended was developed Ron Buford Pastor Buford; Racism Anonymous International⁴⁶. This is a program is still being developed yet has a wide audience and a definite internet presence. The session of this program provides opportunities for individuals to lead book reviews or articles related to racism with shares from attendees based upon the review or reading. The program does not appear to have a focus on actually working the step.

Other programs discovered are

- 12 Step Model of Recovery from White Conditioning⁴⁷ – A collaborative work as presentation material
- A 12-step plan to address racism and unconscious bias⁴⁸ - Kimberly Ellison-Taylor, CPA, CGMA
- Walking the Red Road⁴⁹- The Red Horse Nation
- How to Recover from the Addiction to White Supremacy⁵⁰– Dr. M

⁴⁶ <http://rainternational.org>

⁴⁷ https://overcomingracism.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/Recovery_.pdf

⁴⁸

<https://www.journalofaccountancy.com/news/2020/jun/kimberly-ellison-taylor-plan-to-address-racism-and-unconscious-bias.html>

⁴⁹ <https://www.spirithorsenation.org/the-red-road>

⁵⁰ <https://www.amazon.com/Recover-Addiction-Supremacy-African-12-Step/dp/B001JYQZ0U>

This material is a compilation of the work(s) of many individuals with a heart to help themselves and others with habits, hang-ups, and hurts free themselves for the things that keep them bound. The resources used have been adapted to address habits, hang-ups and hurts as they relate to racism. Every attempt has been made to indicate the source of information in the footnotes.

The foundation of this fellowship is the 12-Step Program of Alcoholics Anonymous (AA).⁵¹ Much of the information used in the materials for this program is from the Big Book⁵² used by AA.

Another great resource for the material used in this fellowship is Alanon⁵³, a program for affected family members of those with the disease of alcoholism. Books from the Alanon program used in this fellowship include, but not limited to,

- How Al-Anon Works⁵⁴
- Courage to Change⁵⁵
- One Day at a Time⁵⁶
- Paths to Recovery⁵⁷

An invaluable resource for this fellowship, and is highly recommended reading is Richard Rohr's writing on the 12-step program with a view of the gospel, Breathing Under Water.

⁵¹ <https://www.aa.org>

⁵² https://www.aa.org/pages/en_US/alcoholics-anonymous

⁵³ https://www.aa.org/pages/en_US/alcoholics-anonymous

⁵⁴

https://ecommm.al-anon.org/iCommerce/Store/StoreLayouts/Item_Detail.aspx?iProductCode=B32&Category=BOOKS&WebsiteKey=00afcaa0-eea4-4375-bbeb-650c5e3e0b3c

⁵⁵

https://ecommm.al-anon.org/iCommerce/Store/StoreLayouts/Item_Detail.aspx?iProductCode=B16&Category=BOOKS&WebsiteKey=00afcaa0-eea4-4375-bbeb-650c5e3e0b3c

⁵⁶

https://ecommm.al-anon.org/iCommerce/Store/StoreLayouts/Item_Detail.aspx?iProductCode=B6&Category=BOOKS&WebsiteKey=00afcaa0-eea4-4375-bbeb-650c5e3e0b3c

⁵⁷

https://ecommm.al-anon.org/iCommerce/Store/StoreLayouts/Item_Detail.aspx?iProductCode=B24&Category=BOOKS&WebsiteKey=00afcaa0-eea4-4375-bbeb-650c5e3e0b3c

Many of the stories were found on the internet which was encouraging to see so many people grappling with their personal racism. If we can keep this shift going, can you imagine what this city, state, country, world will be. . .living wholly in our shared humanity.

Thank you to each writer/author/ organization from whose work we have pulled and adapted for the cause of eliminating racism – and dare we hope for – in our lifetime. A huge thanks goes to the 10 people of the pilot group for this program. Racism is a giant. AND, in the words of King David, **Giants Do Fall**.