

We encounter a new “Powerless Spiritual Opportunity” in each of the Twelve Steps!

Introduction.

I have always been defiant and too self-reliant. I did not trust God, or anyone else. My “purpose”: *get my way*. My “code”: *don’t get caught*. I lived life and made choices “*in control*”.

The last thing I ever wanted was to feel helpless or hopeless—much less powerless!

I was first attracted to the fun and good humor of the AA Fellowship. Then my sponsor guided me through the *Twelve Step spiritual recovery program in the AA Big Book*.

The first words in the Twelve Steps are “We admitted we were powerless ...” (p. 59) I didn’t like that at all! But I grudgingly admitted that I was powerless when it came to alcohol.

I am powerless over more than alcohol. Each of the Twelve Steps guides us to *admit*, *accept* and *benefit* from being powerless over other elements of our lives, in us and outside us.

Admitting and accepting natural human limitations of powerlessness leads us to continue to seek help from a Power greater than ourselves. *We are not helpless or hopeless. We simply have “less power” than we need to deal with life’s challenges on our power alone.*

“Powerlessness” is an opportunity to benefit from spiritual help—without abdicating our responsibilities—to enlarge our spiritual life, ensure our sobriety and enrich our life with purpose, meaning and hope each day.

Step Eight: “Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.” (p. 59)

“We have a list of all persons we have harmed and to whom we are willing to make amends. We made it when we took inventory.” (p. 76)

Resentment Inventory:

“We admitted our wrongs honestly ... willing to set these matters straight.” (p. 67)

Fear Inventory:

“We trust infinite God ... play the role [God] assigns ... humbly rely on [God] ...” (p. 68)

Sexual Conduct Inventory:

“... willing to make amends where we have done harm ...” (p. 69)

I humbly begin to ask God for the willingness to make amends while still doing Step Four!

“We subjected ourselves to a drastic self-appraisal.” (p. 76)

“Relieve me of the bondage of self, that I may better do [God’s] will.” (p. 63)

“... already made a decision, and an inventory of your grosser handicaps ...” (p. 71)

“... admitted certain defects ... weak items in our personal inventory ...” (p. 72)

“... *thought* they had lost their egoism and fear ... had humbled themselves.” (p. 73)

“... let God remove from us ... objectionable [things] ...” (p. 76)

“I am now willing ... pray that you now remove from me ... Grant me strength ...” “

I seek and receive God’s help with honest “drastic self-appraisal” since at least Step Three.

Yet I am powerless, on my own, to have the will to make amends to all those I harmed!

“... forgiveness ... preparing to make a face-to-face admission ... fear conspired with pride to hinder our making a list of *all* the people we had harmed.” (12x12, pp. 78-79)

“If we haven’t the will to do this, we ask until it comes.” (Bold type mine) (p. 76)

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Step Eight: “Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.” (p. 59)

My “Powerless Spiritual Opportunity” in Step Eight is to trust God with my amends.

I write down the name of every person I can remember that I may have harmed with my selfish, inconsiderate behavior driven by my angers, resentments and fears. I ask God to grant me the strength to be willing to write down my wrongs and the harms they may have caused.

<u>Made a list of persons.</u>	<u>Wrong I did.</u>	<u>Harm I caused.</u>
Dad	Insulted him.	Severe Disappointment.
Mom	Lied to her.	Stole her trust.
Brother	Shamed him.	Stole his trust.
Daughter	Abandoned her.	Caused fear.
Son	Abandoned him.	Caused fear.
Former wife	Abandoned her.	Stole her trust.
First former wife	Lied to her.	Stole her trust.
Wife	Lied to her.	Stole her trust.
Boss	Stole from him.	Stole his trust.

*I then ask God to grant me strength to be **willing to take responsibility** for the wrongs I’ve done, the harms I’ve caused—**willing to make direct, honest amends** for these wrongs.*

I am not making direct amends yet! I ask God for the strength and willingness to do so.

<u>Made a list of persons.</u>	<u>Wrong I did.</u>	<u>Harm I caused.</u>	<u>Willing???</u>
Dad	Insulted him.	Severe Disappointment.	Yes
Mom	Lied to her.	Stole her trust.	Yes
Brother	Shamed him.	Stole his trust.	Yes
Daughter	Abandoned her.	Caused fear.	Yes
Son	Abandoned him.	Caused fear.	Yes
Former wife	Abandoned her.	Stole her trust.	Maybe
First former wife	Lied to her.	Stole her trust.	Maybe
Wife	Lied to her.	Stole her trust.	Yes
Boss	Stole from him.	Stole his trust.	Maybe

Some Benefits of Trusting God to provide Strength and Willingness to Make Amends.

1. I *admit* and *accept* my need for God’s strength to become willing to make amends.
2. I choose, I decide, to *act* on my need. I ask for God’s strength, *especially if I don’t want to!*
3. I am powerless over my past. *With God’s strength, I am not powerless to amend my past.*
4. We center our relationship on God. We become responsible in our relationships with others.
5. When I *accept responsibility* for my wrongs done and harms caused to others, my guilt, pride, regret, remorse, shame, and fear begin to melt away. *I begin to feel forgiven.*
6. Taking *responsibility* for my past wrongs helps me learn to *not do wrong in the present.*
7. Trusting God with my amends frees me from my past so *I can enjoy God’s will in the present.*
8. “Purpose”: to become “of maximum service to God and the people about us.” (p. 77)

“We Admitted We Were Powerless” ... Over More Than Alcohol!
An Alcoholics Anonymous “Big Book” Twelve Step Study Workshop
“Threads of Recovery” on Zoom at noon CDT from July 7 to September 29, 2025
Facilitator: Bill H., St. Louis, MO
(All page numbers cited are from Alcoholics Anonymous, Fourth Edition, unless otherwise noted.)

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A POWERLESSNESS PRAYER

God, I thank You and AA for helping me admit that I am powerless over more than just alcohol.

God, I thank You and AA for disclosing to me that I am powerless over my “bondage of self”.

God, I thank You and AA for guiding me to work Steps Four through Six; to learn the “spiritual value” of asking for, and receiving, Your help; to become willing to learn to live without my “objectionable” angers, resentments, fears and inconsiderate treatment of others. I am powerless to “let go” of my “objectionable” defects of character without Your help.

God, I thank You and AA for disclosing to me in Step Seven that I am powerless to *remove* my “shortcomings” with my power alone. Thank You for guiding me to seek and receive Your Strength to gain freedom from my “bondage of self” by trusting You with the unknown and the uncertain things in my life “as I go out from here to do Your bidding”.

God, I thank You and AA for granting me strength in Step Eight to overcome my powerlessness to take responsibility for, and become willing to amend, the harms I have caused others.

Amen.

Next Time, Step Nine: We are powerless over our “diffidence” to make direct amends.