

# Step Eleven: Conscious Contact

Adult Children of Alcoholics · The Recovery Files

For Adult Children of Alcoholics in SUD & Mental Health Recovery

"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."

Your progress 0 of 7 parts done · The Three Pillars of Step Eleven · Prayer · Honest Conversation · Meditation · Receptive Stillness · Surrender · Releasing Control

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Each reading is followed by its check-in questions and exercises, in the same order as the app. Your scored results are shown in the app.

## PART 1 OF 6 · READING

## What Is Step Eleven? Conscious Contact for the ACoA in Recovery

Step Eleven states: "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." For many people in recovery, this step represents the spiritual engine that sustains all the other steps.

For Adult Children of Alcoholics who are also recovering from substance use disorders and co-occurring mental health conditions, Step Eleven is simultaneously one of the most healing and one of the most challenging steps in the entire program.

It is healing because it offers what the ACoA never had: a reliable, loving, non-punishing source of guidance and comfort. It is challenging because nearly every word in the step activates a wound:

"Sought" implies willingness to look for something you are not sure exists — but the ACoA child learned that seeking help leads to disappointment.

"Prayer" suggests talking to a power greater than yourself — but the ACoA child's earliest experience of authority was unpredictable, frightening, or absent.

"Meditation" requires stillness — but the ACoA child's nervous system was calibrated for hypervigilance, where stillness meant vulnerability and vulnerability meant danger.

"Conscious contact" implies relationship — but the ACoA child learned that relationships require performance, control, and constant monitoring to remain safe.

"God as we understood Him" offers freedom of conception — but the ACoA child may have been given a punishing, rigid, or completely absent model of the divine that is difficult to replace.

"His will for us" suggests surrender — but the ACoA child learned that someone else's "will" usually meant suppression of their own needs, desires, and identity.

For the person also recovering from substance use disorder, Step Eleven addresses the spiritual bankruptcy that addiction both creates and exploits. Substances became a counterfeit higher power — reliable, immediate, and effective in the short term. They provided the peace, comfort, numbing, and escape that the ACoA child could not find anywhere else. In active addiction, the substance was the meditation (it quieted the mind), the prayer (it provided temporary relief), and the higher power (it was the one thing that "worked"). Removing the substance without replacing its spiritual function leaves a vacuum that Step Eleven is designed to fill.

The promise of Step Eleven — practiced consistently, honestly, and with self-compassion — is the development of an internal resource that nothing external can provide or take away: conscious contact with something larger than the wounded self, the addicted mind, and the symptomatic brain.

### Reflection Questions

1. As you read the words of Step Eleven, which specific word or phrase triggers the strongest reaction? What wound does it touch?

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2. What was your earliest experience of "God" or a Higher Power? Was it modeled through your family of origin? If so, what was that model like?

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3. Has your substance of choice ever served as a substitute higher power — providing comfort, peace, escape, or a sense of control that nothing else could? Describe that experience.

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4. On a scale of 1 to 10, how comfortable are you with the concepts of prayer, meditation, and surrender? What would moving one point higher on that scale require?

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5. What would it mean for your recovery if you could develop a consistent, honest, daily practice of conscious contact? What would change?

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## YOUR EXERCISE

### Obstacles to Conscious Contact

Naming What Stands Between You and Step Eleven

Obstacles Are Not Failures

Every obstacle to conscious contact has a history — it exists for a reason. The ACoA did not choose perfectionism, unworthiness, or hypervigilance. These were installed by a dysfunctional system. Naming the obstacle and understanding its origin is the first step toward moving through it.

## Perfectionism

The belief that your prayer must be eloquent, your meditation must be deep, and your practice must be consistent to "count."

### ACoA PERSPECTIVE

#### ACoA Root

The ACoA inner critic turns spirituality into another performance to be judged and found wanting.

### SUD/MENTAL HEALTH PERSPECTIVE

#### Antidote

Imperfect practice is infinitely more valuable than perfect avoidance. Two honest minutes outweigh thirty polished ones.

How active is this obstacle in your current Step Eleven practice? (1=rarely, 5=dominant)

☐ 1 Not at all ☐ 2 A little ☐ 3 Somewhat ☐ 4 Quite a bit ☐ 5 Very much

How has this obstacle specifically shown up in your life? Give a concrete example.

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## Unworthiness

The core belief that you do not deserve a relationship with a Higher Power — that you are too broken, too damaged, too sinful.

### ACoA PERSPECTIVE

#### ACoA Root

The ACoA child absorbed the message that their needs did not matter. Praying feels presumptuous when you believe you are unworthy of attention.

### SUD/MENTAL HEALTH PERSPECTIVE

#### Antidote

Worthiness is not a prerequisite for prayer. Prayer is for the broken, not the perfect. You qualify exactly as you are.

How active is this obstacle in your current Step Eleven practice? (1=rarely, 5=dominant)

☐ 1 Not at all ☐ 2 A little ☐ 3 Somewhat ☐ 4 Quite a bit ☐ 5 Very much

How has this obstacle specifically shown up in your life? Give a concrete example.

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## Intellectualization

Analyzing, debating, and philosophizing about spiritual concepts rather than actually practicing them.

ACoA PERSPECTIVE

ACoA Root

The ACoA learned to live in the head to avoid the feelings in the body. Intellectualization is emotional avoidance wearing a spiritual costume.

SUD/MENTAL HEALTH PERSPECTIVE

Antidote

Understanding Step Eleven does not equal practicing it. Close the book. Open your heart. Begin.

How active is this obstacle in your current Step Eleven practice? (1=rarely, 5=dominant)

☐ 1 Not at all ☐ 2 A little ☐ 3 Somewhat ☐ 4 Quite a bit ☐ 5 Very much

How has this obstacle specifically shown up in your life? Give a concrete example.

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## Hypervigilance

The inability to let down your guard long enough to be receptive, still, or vulnerable.

ACoA PERSPECTIVE

ACoA Root

Your nervous system was trained to scan for threat. Meditation asks you to stop scanning — which feels like inviting danger.

SUD/MENTAL HEALTH PERSPECTIVE

Antidote

Begin with eyes-open practices, short durations, and safe environments. Teach your nervous system gradually that stillness is not a threat.

How active is this obstacle in your current Step Eleven practice? (1=rarely, 5=dominant)

☐ 1 Not at all ☐ 2 A little ☐ 3 Somewhat ☐ 4 Quite a bit ☐ 5 Very much

How has this obstacle specifically shown up in your life? Give a concrete example.

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### **All-or-Nothing Thinking**

Practicing intensely for a period and then abandoning the practice entirely when you miss a day.

ACoA PERSPECTIVE

ACoA Root

The ACoA knows only extremes — because their childhood environment was extreme. Moderation was never modeled.

SUD/MENTAL HEALTH PERSPECTIVE

Antidote

Consistency over intensity. Five minutes daily for a year transforms more than a retreat followed by six months of nothing.

How active is this obstacle in your current Step Eleven practice? (1=rarely, 5=dominant)

☐ 1 Not at all ☐ 2 A little ☐ 3 Somewhat ☐ 4 Quite a bit ☐ 5 Very much

How has this obstacle specifically shown up in your life? Give a concrete example.

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### **Isolation**

Practicing spirituality in complete isolation, never sharing your experience, struggles, or growth with another person.

ACoA PERSPECTIVE

ACoA Root

The ACoA learned that sharing is dangerous. But spiritual isolation becomes an echo chamber of the wounded self.

SUD/MENTAL HEALTH PERSPECTIVE

Antidote

Share one thing about your spiritual practice with one person this week. Spiritual growth is meant to be witnessed.

How active is this obstacle in your current Step Eleven practice? (1=rarely, 5=dominant)

☐ 1 Not at all ☐ 2 A little ☐ 3 Somewhat ☐ 4 Quite a bit ☐ 5 Very much

How has this obstacle specifically shown up in your life? Give a concrete example.

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## Mental Health Symptoms

Depression makes prayer feel pointless. Anxiety makes meditation feel impossible. Trauma makes surrender feel dangerous.

ACoA PERSPECTIVE

ACoA Root

These are not failures of faith. They are clinical symptoms that affect your spiritual capacity the same way they affect everything else.

SUD/MENTAL HEALTH PERSPECTIVE

Antidote

On hard days, simplify to: "Help me. Thank you. I'm here." That is enough.

How active is this obstacle in your current Step Eleven practice? (1=rarely, 5=dominant)

☐ 1 Not at all ☐ 2 A little ☐ 3 Somewhat ☐ 4 Quite a bit ☐ 5 Very much

How has this obstacle specifically shown up in your life? Give a concrete example.

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## Substance Use Cravings

Cravings interrupt spiritual practice, convincing you that the substance would provide the peace or relief you are seeking through Step Eleven.

ACoA PERSPECTIVE

ACoA Root

The substance was your first "higher power" — and it does not want to be replaced. Cravings during spiritual practice are the addicted mind fighting for survival.

SUD/MENTAL HEALTH PERSPECTIVE

### Antidote

Name the craving as part of your prayer: "I am experiencing a craving right now, and I am bringing it to you instead of acting on it." The craving becomes the prayer.

How active is this obstacle in your current Step Eleven practice? (1=rarely, 5=dominant)

☐ 1 Not at all ☐ 2 A little ☐ 3 Somewhat ☐ 4 Quite a bit ☐ 5 Very much

How has this obstacle specifically shown up in your life? Give a concrete example.

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## PART 2 OF 6 · READING

# The Spiritual Wound: How Growing Up in Dysfunction Damages Faith

The ACoA does not arrive at Step Eleven with a blank spiritual slate. They arrive with a spiritual wound — sometimes deep, sometimes barely conscious, but almost always present. Understanding this wound is not optional; it is the prerequisite for any authentic Step Eleven practice.

## THE FIVE DIMENSIONS OF THE SPIRITUAL WOUND

### 1. THE WOUNDED IMAGE OF A HIGHER POWER

For many ACoA, the concept of "God" was shaped by the most powerful figures in their early life — parents. If your father was an alcoholic who raged unpredictably, then "God the Father" carries the emotional resonance of terror and chaos. If your mother was emotionally absent, then a "loving presence" feels like a cruel joke or an empty promise. If your parents were controlling, then "God's will" feels like another imposition on your already-suppressed autonomy.

### 2. THE WOUNDED CAPACITY FOR TRUST

Conscious contact with a Higher Power requires trust — trust that something is there, trust that it is not malevolent, trust that reaching out will be met with something other than silence, punishment, or abandonment. The ACoA child learned precisely the opposite. Building trust with an invisible Higher Power when every visible authority figure betrayed that trust is not a simple act of will — it is a process of healing.

### 3. THE WOUNDED RELATIONSHIP WITH STILLNESS

Meditation requires the ability to be still, present, and receptive. For the ACoA whose nervous system was calibrated for hypervigilance, stillness is not peaceful. It is the moment before the explosion. It is the silence that preceded a parent's rage. The ACoA body has learned that dropping your guard is dangerous, and meditation asks you to drop your guard entirely.

### 4. THE WOUNDED UNDERSTANDING OF SURRENDER

"Praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out" asks you to relinquish your agenda, your control, and your insistence on specific outcomes. For the ACoA who survived by controlling everything they could — because nothing in their environment was controllable — this feels like being asked to walk blindfolded off a cliff. Surrender feels like death, not freedom.

### 5. THE WOUNDED CONCEPT OF WORTHINESS

Many ACoA carry a core belief that they are fundamentally unworthy of love, attention, or care from any power — human or divine. Praying feels presumptuous. Meditating feels indulgent. The inner voice says: "Why would God care about you? Your own parents didn't."

Healing the spiritual wound does not happen overnight. It happens in the same way all recovery healing happens: one small act of willingness at a time, repeated daily, in the company of others

who understand. Step Eleven does not require that you arrive healed. It requires only that you arrive willing.

### Reflection Questions

1. Which of the five dimensions of the spiritual wound (wounded image of God, wounded trust, wounded stillness, wounded surrender, wounded worthiness) resonates most strongly with your experience? Why?

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2. Describe the "God" or "Higher Power" that was modeled in your family of origin. Was it spoken about directly, or communicated through how your family treated each other?

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3. When you attempt to be still or meditate, what happens in your body? Do you experience peace, anxiety, restlessness, dissociation, or something else?

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4. How does your substance use history connect to your spiritual wound? Did substances provide what you could not find through faith, prayer, or spiritual connection?

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5. If your spiritual wound could speak, what would it say? Write its message, and then write a compassionate response from your recovering self.

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### CHECK YOURSELF · CHECK-IN 1 OF 5

#### Higher Power Relationship & Trust

Scale: 1 = Not at all · 2 = A little · 3 = Somewhat · 4 = Quite a bit · 5 = Very much

1. I have a concept of a Higher Power that feels safe, personal, and distinct from the punishing or absent authority figures of my childhood  
☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5
2. I can turn to my Higher Power in times of distress without the expectation of being ignored, punished, or abandoned  
☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5
3. My understanding of a Higher Power has evolved beyond the rigid, fear-based, or absent spirituality modeled in my family of origin  
☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5
4. I believe — at least sometimes — that there is a source of guidance, comfort, or meaning greater than my own willpower  
☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5
5. I can distinguish between healthy surrender to a Higher Power and the unhealthy submission I practiced to survive my family  
☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5
6. I have explored and addressed the spiritual wounds that my family of origin and active addiction inflicted on my ability to trust  
☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5
7. I am willing to stay in the uncertainty of "as we understood Him" rather than demanding absolute proof or absolute certainty  
☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5
8. I allow my relationship with a Higher Power to grow and change rather than freezing it in an old image that no longer serves me  
☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

### YOUR EXERCISE

## Higher Power Archaeology

Excavating Your God Image Layer by Layer

Why This Matters

Your current concept of a Higher Power is not formed in a vacuum. It is built from layers of experience — childhood impressions, parental modeling, institutional messaging, and the counterfeit 'god' of active addiction. Until you excavate these layers, you cannot choose what to keep and what to release.

### Layer 1: The Childhood God

What was "God" or "Higher Power" like in your earliest memories? Was God talked about? Feared? Ignored? Used as a threat? Absent?

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What emotions come up as you explore this layer?

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### **Layer 2: The Parent as God**

Your parents were your first "higher powers" — the all-powerful figures who controlled your world. Describe the qualities of that "god." Was it loving? Punishing? Absent? Unpredictable? Conditional?

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What emotions come up as you explore this layer?

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### **Layer 3: The Institutional God**

If you had exposure to organized religion, what was that God like? Was it used to comfort you or control you? Did religious messaging reinforce or contradict what you experienced at home?

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What emotions come up as you explore this layer?

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### **Layer 4: The Substance as God**

During active addiction, what served as your higher power? What did substances provide that no person, institution, or God ever could? Describe the "divine" qualities of your substance.

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What emotions come up as you explore this layer?

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### **Layer 5: The Current God**

Right now — today — what is your honest concept of a Higher Power? Not what you think it should be, but what it actually is. Include doubts, uncertainties, and half-formed ideas.

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What emotions come up as you explore this layer?

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### **Layer 6: The God You Need**

If you could design a Higher Power that would serve your recovery — ACoA healing, SUD recovery, and mental health support — what qualities would it have? What would it NOT have?

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What emotions come up as you explore this layer?

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### **Archaeology Synthesis**

1. Looking at all six layers, what has been the most dominant influence on your concept of a Higher Power?

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2. What from the old layers needs to be released? What, if anything, is worth keeping?

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3. How has your concept of a Higher Power affected your SUD recovery and mental health?

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4. Write a statement that begins: "The Higher Power I am building a relationship with is..." — describe not the god of your past, but the Higher Power of your recovery.

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#### **YOUR EXERCISE**

### **The Trust Ladder**

Building Faith from Scratch — One Rung at a Time

Faith Is Not a Light Switch

For the ACoA whose earliest trust experiences were violated, faith cannot be demanded — it must be built. This trust ladder provides seven progressive stages of spiritual trust. You do not need to be at rung seven. You need to know which rung you are on and commit to staying there until the next one feels safe enough to reach.

#### **Rung 1: Willingness Without Belief**

"I don't know if there is a Higher Power, but I am willing to act as if there might be."

PRACTICE: Simply show up. Attend meetings. Say "I'm willing." You don't need to believe — you need to be open.

How does this rung feel to you? Comfortable, stretching, terrifying, or already past?

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What ACoA wound, SUD pattern, or mental health obstacle makes this rung difficult?

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### **Rung 2: Trusting the Group**

"I may not trust God yet, but I can trust the group — they seem to have something I want."

PRACTICE: Let the group be your Higher Power for now. Their collective wisdom is a legitimate spiritual resource.

How does this rung feel to you? Comfortable, stretching, terrifying, or already past?

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What ACoA wound, SUD pattern, or mental health obstacle makes this rung difficult?

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### **Rung 3: Trusting the Process**

"I notice that when I follow recovery principles, things get better. Something is working."

PRACTICE: Track the evidence. Journal the correlation between spiritual practice and quality of life.

How does this rung feel to you? Comfortable, stretching, terrifying, or already past?

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What ACoA wound, SUD pattern, or mental health obstacle makes this rung difficult?

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#### **Rung 4: Speaking to Something**

"I am willing to direct my thoughts, prayers, or intentions toward something — even if I don't know what it is."

PRACTICE: Begin talking — aloud, in writing, in your mind. Address "whatever is out there" or "the part of me that knows better."

How does this rung feel to you? Comfortable, stretching, terrifying, or already past?

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What ACoA wound, SUD pattern, or mental health obstacle makes this rung difficult?

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#### **Rung 5: Listening for Response**

"I am open to the possibility that guidance, intuition, or wisdom may come from outside my own thinking."

PRACTICE: After prayer, sit quietly for even two minutes. Notice what arises without dismissing it.

How does this rung feel to you? Comfortable, stretching, terrifying, or already past?

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What ACoA wound, SUD pattern, or mental health obstacle makes this rung difficult?

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#### **Rung 6: Trusting the Relationship**

"I am beginning to experience something I would call conscious contact — not certainty, but connection."

PRACTICE: Allow the relationship to deepen through consistent daily practice. Trust grows through repetition, not revelation.

How does this rung feel to you? Comfortable, stretching, terrifying, or already past?

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What ACoA wound, SUD pattern, or mental health obstacle makes this rung difficult?

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### **Rung 7: Surrender in Action**

"I can turn specific situations over to my Higher Power and trust the outcome, even when it is not what I wanted."

PRACTICE: Practice active surrender with specific situations. Notice the relief that comes from releasing control.

How does this rung feel to you? Comfortable, stretching, terrifying, or already past?

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What ACoA wound, SUD pattern, or mental health obstacle makes this rung difficult?

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### **YOUR EXERCISE**

## **Inner Child Meets Higher Power**

A Healing Dialogue Between Your Wounded Self and Your Source of Safety

The Conversation That Never Happened

The ACoA inner child needed a protector, comforter, and guide — and did not receive one. Step Eleven offers the possibility of that relationship now, through a Higher Power that provides what the original authority figures could not.

## Your inner child speaks about FEAR

INNER CHILD SPEAKS:

What is your inner child afraid of? What was never safe? Write as the child — use their voice, their words, their raw honesty.

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HIGHER POWER RESPONDS:

How would a loving, safe Higher Power respond to this child's fear? Write the response you needed but never received.

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## Your inner child speaks about ANGER

INNER CHILD SPEAKS:

What is your inner child angry about? Who failed them? What was unfair? Let the rage speak without censorship.

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HIGHER POWER RESPONDS:

How would a Higher Power who validates your anger — rather than punishing it — respond?

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## Your inner child speaks about LONELINESS

INNER CHILD SPEAKS:

When did your inner child feel most alone? What did they need that no one provided? Describe the aloneness.

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HIGHER POWER RESPONDS:

How would a Higher Power who is always present — who never abandons — respond to this loneliness?

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### **Your inner child speaks about WORTHINESS**

INNER CHILD SPEAKS:

Does your inner child believe they deserve love, care, recovery, and a relationship with a Higher Power? What do they believe about their own worth?

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HIGHER POWER RESPONDS:

How would a Higher Power who sees your full worth — not despite your wounds but including them — respond?

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### **Your inner child speaks about TRUST**

INNER CHILD SPEAKS:

Can your inner child trust this Higher Power? What proof does the child need? What has to happen before trust is possible?

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HIGHER POWER RESPONDS:

How would a patient Higher Power — one willing to wait, to prove itself, to never force — respond to the child's inability to trust?

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## PART 3 OF 6 · READING

## Relearning Prayer: From Performance to Honest Conversation

For many ACoA, prayer — if they experienced it at all — was one of three things: a performance (reciting words to satisfy someone else's expectations), a negotiation (bargaining with God for specific outcomes), or an emergency measure (screaming for help in a crisis and receiving silence). None of these prepares you for the kind of prayer that Step Eleven describes.

Step Eleven prayer is not a performance. It does not require specific words, correct posture, proper reverence, or theological accuracy. It requires honesty. That is all.

Honest prayer means telling whatever you understand your Higher Power to be exactly what is happening inside you — without editing, without performing, without trying to sound spiritual or recovered or together. If you are angry, your prayer is anger. If you are afraid, your prayer is fear. If you are grateful, your prayer is gratitude. If you doubt the entire process, your prayer is doubt. The only dishonest prayer is the one that pretends you are somewhere you are not.

For the ACoA, learning to pray honestly is revolutionary. You grew up in a system where honesty was dangerous, where expressing your true feelings was punished, and where the only safe communication strategy was to figure out what the authority figure wanted to hear and deliver it. Honest prayer reverses this dynamic. It says: "You do not have to manage this relationship. You do not have to guess what the Higher Power wants to hear. You do not have to earn love through performance. You can simply tell the truth."

Step Eleven specifies that we pray "only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out." This is radically different from the prayer most people practice, which is essentially a wish list. Step Eleven prayer is not about getting what you want. It is about aligning yourself with something larger than your own wants — and trusting that this alignment will produce better outcomes than your own agenda ever could.

For the person in SUD recovery, this shift is essential. The addicted mind is an agenda machine. It wants what it wants when it wants it. Step Eleven prayer is the daily practice of loosening the grip of that agenda. Instead of "I want what I want," it becomes "Show me what serves my highest good." Instead of "Fix this," it becomes "Help me accept this." Instead of "Make this feeling go away," it becomes "Give me the strength to feel this and not use."

The forms prayer can take are unlimited. Spoken words. Written journal entries. Walking in nature. Creative expression. Silent contemplation. The only requirement is honesty. Begin where you are, not where you think you should be. If the most honest prayer you can manage today is "I don't know if anyone is listening, but I need help" — that is a perfect Step Eleven prayer.

### Reflection Questions

1. What has prayer looked like in your life so far? Has it been performance, negotiation, emergency, or something else?

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2. How difficult is it for you to be emotionally honest in prayer? What would you tell a Higher Power if you knew it was absolutely safe to tell the truth?

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3. What is the difference between "praying for what I want" and "praying for knowledge of God's will"? How would shifting between those two change your daily experience?

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4. For the person with co-occurring mental health conditions: Have you ever used prayer as a grounding or externalizing practice during a symptom flare? What happened?

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5. Write a completely honest prayer right now. Do not edit it for content, language, or "spirituality." Just tell the truth about where you are today.

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#### CHECK YOURSELF · CHECK-IN 2 OF 5

#### Prayer Practice & Conscious Contact

Scale: 1 = Not at all · 2 = A little · 3 = Somewhat · 4 = Quite a bit · 5 = Very much

1. I engage in some form of prayer or conscious contact daily, even when I do not feel like it

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

2. My prayers include honest expression of my feelings — including anger, doubt, and fear — rather than performance or scripted phrases

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

3. I pray for knowledge of my Higher Power's will rather than demanding specific outcomes or solutions

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

4. I can pray without the ACoA pattern of trying to control the conversation, manage the outcome, or earn approval

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

5. I have found forms of prayer that feel authentic to me rather than mimicking what others told me prayer should look like

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

6. I include prayers of gratitude, not just prayers of petition or crisis management

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

7. I am willing to pray for people I resent or have difficulty with, even when it feels forced or insincere at first

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

8. I understand that prayer changes me more than it changes circumstances — and I am open to being changed

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

#### **YOUR EXERCISE**

### **Prayer Forms Explorer**

Finding Your Authentic Voice of Conscious Contact

Many Languages, One Conversation

Prayer is not one-size-fits-all. Explore all eight forms below, then identify the ones that feel most authentic and sustainable for you.

#### **Written Prayer / Journaling**

Writing your prayers in a journal — letters to your Higher Power, honest outpourings, requests, gratitude.

##### **ACoA PERSPECTIVE**

For the ACoA

Writing provides distance and safety for ACoA who find spoken vulnerability overwhelming. The page does not judge, interrupt, or leave.

##### **SUD/MENTAL HEALTH PERSPECTIVE**

For SUD/Mental Health Recovery

Written prayer creates a record you can return to — evidence of growth, patterns of struggle, and prayers that were answered in unexpected ways.

Have you tried this form of prayer? What was your experience?

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Rate your openness to this form (1=resistant, 5=drawn to it):

☐ 1 Not at all ☐ 2 A little ☐ 3 Somewhat ☐ 4 Quite a bit ☐ 5 Very much

### **Spoken Conversational Prayer**

Talking to your Higher Power as you would talk to a trusted friend — out loud or silently, in your own words.

ACoA PERSPECTIVE

For the ACoA

May be difficult for ACoA who were silenced or punished for self-expression. Start in private, with small honest statements.

SUD/MENTAL HEALTH PERSPECTIVE

For SUD/Mental Health Recovery

Replace the internal monologue of addictive thinking with spoken connection. When the addicted mind talks, talk back — to your Higher Power.

Have you tried this form of prayer? What was your experience?

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Rate your openness to this form (1=resistant, 5=drawn to it):

☐ 1 Not at all ☐ 2 A little ☐ 3 Somewhat ☐ 4 Quite a bit ☐ 5 Very much

### **Nature-Based Connection**

Finding conscious contact in the natural world — walks, sunrises, gardens, water, mountains, sky.

ACoA PERSPECTIVE

For the ACoA

Nature provides a non-threatening, non-human model of a Higher Power. It does not judge, demand performance, or withdraw love.

SUD/MENTAL HEALTH PERSPECTIVE

For SUD/Mental Health Recovery

Nature engages the senses, which grounds you in the present moment and interrupts the future-spinning of addictive thinking.

Have you tried this form of prayer? What was your experience?

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Rate your openness to this form (1=resistant, 5=drawn to it):

☐ 1 Not at all ☐ 2 A little ☐ 3 Somewhat ☐ 4 Quite a bit ☐ 5 Very much

### **Physical / Movement Prayer**

Yoga, walking meditation, running, dance, or any form of intentional movement offered as spiritual practice.

#### **ACoA PERSPECTIVE**

For the ACoA

Movement prayer bypasses the intellectual defenses that ACoA use to avoid vulnerability. The body prays when the mind resists.

#### **SUD/MENTAL HEALTH PERSPECTIVE**

For SUD/Mental Health Recovery

Physical practice reduces the restlessness, irritability, and discontent that drive relapse. It is a natural dopamine source.

Have you tried this form of prayer? What was your experience?

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Rate your openness to this form (1=resistant, 5=drawn to it):

☐ 1 Not at all ☐ 2 A little ☐ 3 Somewhat ☐ 4 Quite a bit ☐ 5 Very much

### **Creative Expression**

Art, music, poetry, photography, or any creative act offered as an expression of spiritual connection.

#### **ACoA PERSPECTIVE**

For the ACoA

Creative prayer allows the inner child to participate — they can draw, color, sing, or create what words cannot express.

### SUD/MENTAL HEALTH PERSPECTIVE

For SUD/Mental Health Recovery

Creativity fills the void that substances once occupied. It is generative rather than destructive — it creates rather than consumes.

Have you tried this form of prayer? What was your experience?

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Rate your openness to this form (1=resistant, 5=drawn to it):

☐ 1 Not at all ☐ 2 A little ☐ 3 Somewhat ☐ 4 Quite a bit ☐ 5 Very much

### Service as Prayer

Acts of service — helping another person, contributing to your community, offering your time and energy.

ACoA PERSPECTIVE

For the ACoA

Service prayer must be distinguished from ACoA compulsive caretaking. Genuine service comes from abundance; caretaking comes from fear.

### SUD/MENTAL HEALTH PERSPECTIVE

For SUD/Mental Health Recovery

Service gets you out of self — the most dangerous neighborhood for the addicted mind. It connects you to purpose beyond craving.

Have you tried this form of prayer? What was your experience?

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Rate your openness to this form (1=resistant, 5=drawn to it):

☐ 1 Not at all ☐ 2 A little ☐ 3 Somewhat ☐ 4 Quite a bit ☐ 5 Very much

### Formal / Liturgical Prayer

Established prayers — the Serenity Prayer, St. Francis Prayer, Third Step Prayer, or prayers from your spiritual tradition.

ACoA PERSPECTIVE

For the ACoA

Formal prayers provide structure that can feel safe for ACoA who are overwhelmed by open-ended spiritual freedom. They are training wheels.

#### SUD/MENTAL HEALTH PERSPECTIVE

For SUD/Mental Health Recovery

Recovery prayers encode recovery wisdom in repeatable form. Repetition builds neural pathways of recovery thinking.

Have you tried this form of prayer? What was your experience?

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Rate your openness to this form (1=resistant, 5=drawn to it):

☐ 1 Not at all ☐ 2 A little ☐ 3 Somewhat ☐ 4 Quite a bit ☐ 5 Very much

### Silence and Listening

Sitting quietly with the intention of receiving rather than sending — listening for guidance, intuition, or inner wisdom.

#### ACoA PERSPECTIVE

For the ACoA

The most challenging form for hypervigilant ACoA. Start with very short periods. Silence is learned safety, not automatic peace.

#### SUD/MENTAL HEALTH PERSPECTIVE

For SUD/Mental Health Recovery

Silence confronts the addicted mind's need for constant stimulation and noise. It is the opposite of the chaos addiction creates and craves.

Have you tried this form of prayer? What was your experience?

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Rate your openness to this form (1=resistant, 5=drawn to it):

☐ 1 Not at all ☐ 2 A little ☐ 3 Somewhat ☐ 4 Quite a bit ☐ 5 Very much

## PART 4 OF 6 · READING

## Meditation for the Hypervigilant Mind: Finding Safety in Stillness

Meditation is the listening half of Step Eleven. If prayer is speaking to your Higher Power, meditation is creating the conditions to hear the response. But for the ACoA — whose nervous system was trained for constant threat detection — traditional meditation instructions can feel not just difficult but terrifying.

"Clear your mind." The ACoA mind does not clear. It monitors. It predicts. It rehearses. It replays. It scans. Asking it to stop is like asking a soldier in combat to put down their weapon and sit cross-legged in an open field.

"Be present in your body." For many ACoA — especially those with trauma histories — the body is not a safe place to inhabit. The body holds the unprocessed experiences of childhood: the tension, the fear, the helplessness, the pain. Being asked to "sit with" bodily sensations can activate trauma responses including panic, dissociation, flashbacks, and overwhelming emotion.

So how does the ACoA practice meditation? The answer is: gently, creatively, and in ways adapted to the needs of a nervous system that was shaped by adversity.

### FIVE APPROACHES FOR THE ACoA NERVOUS SYSTEM

**Grounded Meditation:** Uses external anchors rather than internal ones. Instead of focusing on the breath (which can trigger panic), focus on a physical object — a stone, a candle flame, the texture of fabric. Keep eyes partially open with a soft downward gaze.

**Titrated Meditation:** Works in small doses. Instead of twenty or thirty minutes of silent sitting, begin with two minutes. Then three. Then five. Let your nervous system learn gradually that stillness is not followed by danger.

**Active Meditation:** Uses movement, sound, or activity as the meditative anchor. Walking meditation, art meditation, music, gardening — these can all serve as Step Eleven meditation for the person whose nervous system cannot tolerate traditional seated stillness.

**Guided Meditation:** Provides the structure and safety that the ACoA nervous system needs. Rather than sitting in open silence, guided meditation provides a voice, a direction, and a container. This mimics the function of a safe parent.

**Somatic Meditation:** Works with the body's stress response rather than against it. Instead of trying to relax, notice the tension. Instead of fighting the restlessness, observe it. This teaches the nervous system that it can experience activation without being destroyed by it.

The goal of Step Eleven meditation is not to achieve some blissful, thought-free state. The goal is to develop the capacity to be present — with yourself, with reality, with whatever your Higher Power might communicate — for increasing periods of time without needing to escape into substances, distraction, or dissociation. That capacity grows slowly. Be patient with yourself. The hypervigilant mind is learning a new skill: safety.

## Reflection Questions

1. What happens when you try to sit in silence? Describe the physical, emotional, and mental experience honestly.

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2. Which meditation approach described above (grounded, titrated, active, guided, somatic) feels most accessible to your nervous system? Why?

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3. How does your hypervigilance show up in daily life? Can you distinguish between genuine awareness and the ACoA pattern of scanning for threat?

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4. Have you had a meditation experience that felt re-traumatizing rather than healing? What happened, and what did you learn from it?

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5. If your nervous system could speak to you about stillness, what would it say? Write its message, and write a compassionate response promising to honor its needs.

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## CHECK YOURSELF · CHECK-IN 3 OF 5

### Meditation, Stillness & Presence

Scale: 1 = Not at all · 2 = A little · 3 = Somewhat · 4 = Quite a bit · 5 = Very much

1. I can sit in stillness for at least five minutes without being overwhelmed by anxiety, restlessness, or the need to do something

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

2. I practice some form of meditation, mindfulness, or contemplative stillness on a regular basis  
☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5
3. I can observe my thoughts without attaching to them, believing them as absolute truth, or being swept away by them  
☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5
4. I notice when my ACoA hypervigilance is masquerading as awareness and can distinguish between the two  
☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5
5. Silence does not feel dangerous to me the way it did in my family of origin, where silence often preceded chaos  
☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5
6. I can be present in my body during meditation without dissociation, panic, or the need to escape physical sensations  
☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5
7. I have found meditation practices that work for my nervous system rather than forcing myself into practices that re-traumatize me  
☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5
8. I am growing in my capacity to listen — to my body, to others, and to whatever wisdom my Higher Power may offer  
☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

#### YOUR EXERCISE

### Body & Stillness Map

Understanding What Happens When You Stop Moving

Your Nervous System Has a Memory

For ACoA, stillness is not just absence of movement — it carries emotional history. This exercise maps what happens in your body when you attempt to be still, helping you understand the nervous system responses that make meditation challenging.

#### Phase 1: Before Stillness

Right now, before attempting any stillness practice — what is your body doing? Scan from head to feet. Note tension, energy, numbness, pain, restlessness, warmth, cold. What is your mind doing? Racing, planning, resisting, curious?

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#### Phase 2: First 60 Seconds

Set a timer for 60 seconds. Sit or stand in stillness with eyes open. When the timer ends, write immediately: What happened in your body? What happened in your mind? What happened in your emotions?

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### **Phase 3: Three Minutes**

Set a timer for 3 minutes. Use any anchor (object, gentle music, breath if safe). When done: Where did your mind go? Did your body intensify, relax, or cycle between? Did any memories or images arise?

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### **Phase 4: Identifying the Threat**

What feels threatening about stillness? Be specific. Is it vulnerability? Loss of control? Silence before chaos? Fear of what might surface? Name the specific threat your nervous system perceives.

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### **Phase 5: What Your Body Remembers**

When you are still, does your body remind you of anything from childhood? A specific room, time of day, situation? The stillness before a parent's rage? Describe what your body remembers.

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### **Phase 6: Building Safety**

What would make stillness feel safer? Eyes open? A weighted blanket? A specific location? Ambient sound? What does your nervous system need to begin trusting stillness?

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## PART 5 OF 6 · READING

## Surrender vs. Submission: The ACoA's Central Spiritual Challenge

For the Adult Child of an Alcoholic, there may be no concept in all of recovery more confusing, triggering, and ultimately transformative than surrender. Step Eleven asks you to pray "only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out" — which requires surrendering your own agenda, your own control, and your own insistence on knowing what happens next.

The reason surrender feels existentially threatening for the ACoA is that they have been surrendering their entire life — but the surrender they practiced was not the healthy surrender of Step Eleven. It was submission.

### SUBMISSION vs. SURRENDER

Submission is what the ACoA child practiced to survive: giving up their voice, their needs, their boundaries, their authentic self in order to maintain whatever fragile stability existed in the household. Submission says: "Your will is more important than mine, and I will erase myself to accommodate it." Submission is not a spiritual practice. It is a survival mechanism born of powerlessness.

Step Eleven surrender is fundamentally different. It does not ask you to erase yourself. It asks you to align yourself. It does not say "your needs don't matter." It says "there is a source of wisdom larger than your fear-driven mind, and aligning with that source produces better outcomes than your control ever could." It requires the willingness to hold your authentic self lightly — to bring your full self to the process and then to release your grip on the outcome.

The distinction between surrender and submission is the most important spiritual distinction the ACoA will ever learn. Without it, Step Eleven becomes another exercise in self-erasure. With it, Step Eleven becomes a practice of liberation.

For the person in SUD recovery, surrender has an additional dimension. The addicted mind is the ultimate control system. It controls mood through chemicals. It controls relationships through manipulation. It controls reality through denial. Asking the addicted mind to surrender is asking it to relinquish the one strategy that seemed to work. This is not a logical argument the mind can process its way through. It is a leap of faith.

Learning to surrender is a practice, not an event. You do not achieve surrender once and keep it forever. You practice it daily — in small moments, with small stakes, building the muscle of letting go one tiny grip at a time.

The ACoA who learns to surrender — truly surrender, not submit — discovers something they have never experienced: the relief of not being responsible for everything. The relief of not having to manage every outcome. The relief of allowing something larger than their wounded, exhausted, hypervigilant self to carry some of the weight. This relief is not weakness. It is the beginning of genuine strength.

### Reflection Questions

1. In your own words, describe the difference between surrender and submission. Can you identify times in your life when you practiced each?

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2. Where in your life right now are you clinging to control? What are you afraid will happen if you let go?

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3. How does your ACoA history specifically complicate the concept of surrender? What survival patterns does it activate?

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4. Describe a time when you did surrender something — a situation, a relationship, an outcome — and the result was better than what you had planned. What did that teach you?

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5. If surrender is a practice and not an event, what is one small area of your life where you could practice letting go today?

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#### CHECK YOURSELF · CHECK-IN 4 OF 5

#### Surrender, Will & Control

Scale: 1 = Not at all · 2 = A little · 3 = Somewhat · 4 = Quite a bit · 5 = Very much

1. I can distinguish between healthy surrender (letting go of what I cannot control) and unhealthy submission (giving up my voice and agency)

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

2. I notice when I am trying to control outcomes, people, or situations and can practice letting go

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

3. I pray for the power to carry out my Higher Power's will rather than the power to carry out my own agenda

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

4. I can tolerate not knowing what will happen without defaulting to control, manipulation, or anxiety-driven planning

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

5. I recognize when my "need to control" is actually my inner child's terror of living in an unpredictable household

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

6. I practice "turning it over" as an active spiritual discipline rather than as passive resignation or giving up

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

7. I can distinguish between my will (what I want) and my Higher Power's will (what serves my highest good and the good of others)

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

8. I am growing in my ability to trust the process of recovery even when I cannot see where it is leading

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

### YOUR EXERCISE

## Surrender vs. Submission Inventory

The ACoA's Most Important Spiritual Distinction

Two Postures, Opposite Outcomes

Submission erases you. Surrender frees you. The ACoA practiced submission for survival — giving up voice, needs, and self to maintain what little safety existed. Step Eleven surrender is the opposite: showing up fully and then releasing the outcome.

### In Relationships

SUBMISSION (ACoA Wound)

I erase my needs, opinions, and boundaries to keep the other person happy and prevent conflict.

SURRENDER (Recovery)

I express my authentic self, do my best to be loving, and release the outcome of whether they accept me.

Which pattern is more active in this area of your life? Be honest.

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What would it feel like to shift from submission to surrender in this area?

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### **At Work**

SUBMISSION (ACoA Wound)

I overwork, over-perform, and never say no — because my worth depends on their approval.

SURRENDER (Recovery)

I do excellent work, set appropriate limits, and trust that my value is not determined by any single person's opinion.

Which pattern is more active in this area of your life? Be honest.

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What would it feel like to shift from submission to surrender in this area?

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### **With My Recovery**

SUBMISSION (ACoA Wound)

I follow rules rigidly out of fear of punishment, performing recovery for others rather than living it for myself.

SURRENDER (Recovery)

I work the program because I have experienced its benefits, and I trust the process even when I cannot see the outcome.

Which pattern is more active in this area of your life? Be honest.

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What would it feel like to shift from submission to surrender in this area?

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### **With My Higher Power**

SUBMISSION (ACoA Wound)

I try to figure out what God wants and contort myself to deliver it — the same pattern I practiced with my parents.

SURRENDER (Recovery)

I bring my honest self to my Higher Power, ask for guidance, and trust that I am acceptable as I am.

Which pattern is more active in this area of your life? Be honest.

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What would it feel like to shift from submission to surrender in this area?

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### **With My Mental Health**

SUBMISSION (ACoA Wound)

I accept suffering as my fate, believing I deserve it or that it is punishment for my past.

SURRENDER (Recovery)

I do everything within my power to manage my condition, and I accept that some things are beyond my control without shame.

Which pattern is more active in this area of your life? Be honest.

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What would it feel like to shift from submission to surrender in this area?

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### **With Uncertainty**

SUBMISSION (ACoA Wound)

I collapse into helplessness, believing that if I cannot control the outcome, I am doomed.

SURRENDER (Recovery)

I release my grip on specific outcomes while remaining actively engaged in doing the next right thing.

Which pattern is more active in this area of your life? Be honest.

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What would it feel like to shift from submission to surrender in this area?

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### **YOUR EXERCISE**

## **My Will vs. Higher Power's Will**

Practicing the Core of Step Eleven: Alignment Over Agenda

Two Wills, One Life

Step Eleven asks you to pray 'only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out.' This does not mean your will is always wrong. It means your will — especially the ACoA's fear-driven, control-seeking will — may not see the full picture.

### **My Recovery Path**

MY WILL: What do YOU want your recovery to look like? What outcomes are you attached to?

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HIGHER POWER'S WILL: If you surrendered the specifics to your Higher Power and prayed only for guidance, what might look different?

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### **My Relationships**

MY WILL: What are you trying to control in your most important relationships? What outcomes are you demanding?

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HIGHER POWER'S WILL: What would it look like to bring your best self to relationships and release the outcome?

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### **My Mental Health**

MY WILL: Are you demanding that your mental health be "fixed" on your timeline? What are you refusing to accept?

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HIGHER POWER'S WILL: What would it mean to do your best to manage your condition while surrendering the outcome to your Higher Power?

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### **My Past / ACoA Wounds**

MY WILL: Are you trying to control how quickly you heal? Are you comparing your timeline to others?

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HIGHER POWER'S WILL: What would it look like to trust the process of healing rather than demanding a specific pace or result?

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### **Today**

MY WILL: Right now, today — what are you trying to force, fix, control, or manage that might not be yours to handle?

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HIGHER POWER'S WILL: What is the one thing you could surrender right now — today — that would bring you the most relief?

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## PART 6 OF 6 · READING

## Building a Daily Practice: Step Eleven as a Way of Life

Step Eleven is not a step you work once and check off a list. It is a daily practice — as essential to recovery as breathing is to physical life. The spiritual life, like recovery itself, is a journey without a destination.

### THE FIVE OBSTACLES TO DAILY PRACTICE

1. **PERFECTIONISM:** The ACoA inner critic will try to turn Step Eleven into another arena for performance and self-judgment. "You didn't meditate long enough." "Your prayer wasn't spiritual enough." The antidote is to commit to the practice rather than the performance. A two-minute prayer spoken honestly while driving to work is infinitely more valuable than a thirty-minute meditation done perfectly but without sincerity.
2. **ALL-OR-NOTHING THINKING:** The ACoA tends to approach Step Eleven the way they approach everything: either with total intensity or total avoidance. They meditate for an hour a day for two weeks and then abandon the practice entirely when they miss a day. The antidote is consistency over intensity. Five minutes every day produces more transformation over time than occasional marathon sessions.
3. **ISOLATION:** The ACoA's tendency to do everything alone can turn Step Eleven into a solitary, internal practice disconnected from community. But Step Eleven is strengthened by shared practice: praying with others, meditating in groups, discussing spiritual experiences with sponsors and trusted peers. The spiritual journey is meant to be walked in company.
4. **INTELLECTUALIZATION:** The ACoA often uses intellectual analysis as a defense against feeling. They can discuss the theology of prayer, the neuroscience of meditation, and the philosophy of surrender without ever actually praying, meditating, or surrendering. Step Eleven is not an academic subject. Understanding it does not count. Doing it does.
5. **MENTAL HEALTH SYMPTOMS:** Depression can make prayer feel pointless. Anxiety can make meditation feel impossible. Trauma can make surrender feel dangerous. On days when your mental health symptoms are intense, your Step Eleven practice may need to be simplified to its most basic form: "Help me. Thank you. I'm here." That is enough.

### A SUSTAINABLE DAILY FRAMEWORK

**Morning:** Spend three to five minutes in conscious contact before the day begins. A written prayer, a spoken request for guidance, or simply: "I am willing to be guided today."

**Throughout the day:** Pause periodically for a spot-check: "Am I connected right now, or am I running on self-will?" "Do I need to turn something over?"

**Evening:** Spend five minutes in reflection: "Where did I experience conscious contact today?" "What am I grateful for?" "What do I need to surrender as I move into sleep?"

This practice is not complicated. It requires willingness — the same willingness that brought you into recovery in the first place. And like everything else in recovery, it works if you work it. Not

perfectly. Not every day with equal depth or enthusiasm. But consistently, honestly, and with the understanding that showing up imperfectly is infinitely more powerful than waiting until you can show up perfectly.

### Reflection Questions

1. Which of the five obstacles (perfectionism, all-or-nothing thinking, isolation, intellectualization, mental health) is your biggest barrier to consistent Step Eleven practice?

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2. Describe what your ideal daily Step Eleven practice would look like — morning, throughout the day, and evening. Be realistic, not aspirational.

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3. How does your mental health condition affect your capacity for prayer and meditation? On your worst days, what is the simplest form of conscious contact you can manage?

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4. Who in your life could you share your spiritual practice with? What would it take to break the pattern of spiritual isolation?

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5. Write a realistic commitment: "For the next thirty days, my Step Eleven practice will include \_\_\_\_ in the morning, \_\_\_\_ during the day, and \_\_\_\_ in the evening."

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### CHECK YOURSELF · CHECK-IN 5 OF 5

#### Daily Spiritual Integration

Scale: 1 = Not at all · 2 = A little · 3 = Somewhat · 4 = Quite a bit · 5 = Very much

1. I begin my day with some form of conscious contact — however brief — before engaging with the demands of life  
☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5
2. I have moments throughout the day where I pause, reconnect, and realign with my spiritual practice  
☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5
3. I end my day with reflection, gratitude, or prayer rather than collapsing into distraction or numbing  
☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5
4. My spiritual practice positively impacts how I treat other people, especially in difficult moments  
☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5
5. I can identify the difference between days when I maintain conscious contact and days when I do not — and I notice the effect  
☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5
6. My spiritual practice supports my SUD recovery, my mental health management, and my ACoA healing simultaneously  
☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5
7. I share my spiritual journey with at least one other person in recovery rather than practicing in isolation  
☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5
8. I am patient with my own spiritual development, understanding that conscious contact deepens over time rather than arriving fully formed  
☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

### YOUR EXERCISE

## Seven-Day Conscious Contact Journal

Building the Daily Habit of Step Eleven Practice

Seven Days, Six Questions

Each day, answer six simple questions that cover morning practice, prayer, meditation, surrender, ACoA awareness, and evening reflection. After seven days, review the patterns. Consistency builds the muscle of conscious contact.

### Day 1

Date:

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Morning: What form of conscious contact did I practice this morning? (Even 2 minutes counts)

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Prayer: What did I honestly bring to my Higher Power today?

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Meditation/Stillness: How long did I practice stillness? What happened in my body and mind?

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Surrender: What did I try to control today? Was I able to release any of it?

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ACoA Awareness: Did any ACoA pattern interfere with my spiritual practice today?

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Evening: Where did I experience conscious contact today — and where did I miss it?

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## Day 2

Date:

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Morning: What form of conscious contact did I practice this morning? (Even 2 minutes counts)

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Prayer: What did I honestly bring to my Higher Power today?

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Meditation/Stillness: How long did I practice stillness? What happened in my body and mind?

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Surrender: What did I try to control today? Was I able to release any of it?

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ACoA Awareness: Did any ACoA pattern interfere with my spiritual practice today?

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Evening: Where did I experience conscious contact today — and where did I miss it?

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### **Day 3**

Date:

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Morning: What form of conscious contact did I practice this morning? (Even 2 minutes counts)

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Prayer: What did I honestly bring to my Higher Power today?

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Meditation/Stillness: How long did I practice stillness? What happened in my body and mind?

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Surrender: What did I try to control today? Was I able to release any of it?

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ACoA Awareness: Did any ACoA pattern interfere with my spiritual practice today?

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Evening: Where did I experience conscious contact today — and where did I miss it?

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## Day 4

Date:

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Morning: What form of conscious contact did I practice this morning? (Even 2 minutes counts)

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Prayer: What did I honestly bring to my Higher Power today?

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Meditation/Stillness: How long did I practice stillness? What happened in my body and mind?

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Surrender: What did I try to control today? Was I able to release any of it?

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ACoA Awareness: Did any ACoA pattern interfere with my spiritual practice today?

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Evening: Where did I experience conscious contact today — and where did I miss it?

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## Day 5

Date:

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Morning: What form of conscious contact did I practice this morning? (Even 2 minutes counts)

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Prayer: What did I honestly bring to my Higher Power today?

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Meditation/Stillness: How long did I practice stillness? What happened in my body and mind?

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Surrender: What did I try to control today? Was I able to release any of it?

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ACoA Awareness: Did any ACoA pattern interfere with my spiritual practice today?

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Evening: Where did I experience conscious contact today — and where did I miss it?

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## Day 6

Date:

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Morning: What form of conscious contact did I practice this morning? (Even 2 minutes counts)

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Prayer: What did I honestly bring to my Higher Power today?

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Meditation/Stillness: How long did I practice stillness? What happened in my body and mind?

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Surrender: What did I try to control today? Was I able to release any of it?

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ACoA Awareness: Did any ACoA pattern interfere with my spiritual practice today?

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Evening: Where did I experience conscious contact today — and where did I miss it?

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## Day 7

Date:

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Morning: What form of conscious contact did I practice this morning? (Even 2 minutes counts)

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Prayer: What did I honestly bring to my Higher Power today?

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Meditation/Stillness: How long did I practice stillness? What happened in my body and mind?

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Surrender: What did I try to control today? Was I able to release any of it?

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ACoA Awareness: Did any ACoA pattern interfere with my spiritual practice today?

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Evening: Where did I experience conscious contact today — and where did I miss it?

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## YOUR EXERCISE

### Personal Step Eleven Blueprint

Designing Your Sustainable Practice of Conscious Contact

Your Design for Conscious Contact

Everything you have read, assessed, and explored comes together here. This is YOUR Step Eleven plan — custom-built from your specific wounds, strengths, obstacles, and spiritual capacity. It needs to be honest, sustainable, and yours.

## My Higher Power Concept

1. Describe your current concept of a Higher Power in your own words. Include any uncertainties — they are part of the journey.

Define your relationship...

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2. What qualities does your Higher Power have that your childhood authority figures lacked?

Define your relationship...

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3. How do you want your relationship with your Higher Power to grow over the next year?

Define your relationship...

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## My Prayer Practice

1. What forms of prayer will be part of my daily practice? (Choose at least two)

Design your prayer practice...

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2. When will I pray? (Morning time, midday pause, evening review — be specific)

Design your prayer practice...

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3. What will my "emergency prayer" be — the prayer I can access when in crisis or when cravings hit? (Keep it short and memorable)

Design your prayer practice...

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## My Meditation Practice

1. Based on the Body & Stillness Map, what type of meditation is appropriate for my nervous system right now?

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2. How long will I practice? (Start realistic — two minutes is a perfect beginning)

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3. What environment supports my meditation?

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4. How will I respond if meditation triggers anxiety or trauma responses? (What is my safety protocol?)

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## My Step Eleven Commitment

Your Commitment Statement

This is your personal declaration — a statement that captures your commitment to conscious contact as a daily practice. Make it real. Make it yours. Make it something your inner child can hear and trust.

I commit to the practice of conscious contact because...

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Start date:

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Who I will share this with:

Sponsor, therapist, trusted friend...

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"Conscious contact is not a destination. It is a daily homecoming."

The ACoA inner child never had a safe home to return to. Step Eleven, practiced daily, builds that home inside you — a place of honest prayer, safe stillness, and the growing trust that you are not alone, that you are worthy of guidance, and that surrender is not the end of you but the beginning of freedom. One day at a time.