

Steps Six & Seven — Al-Anon

Al-Anon Deep Dive · The Recovery Files

Readiness, Humility, and the Asking

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

"Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings." · A Dual-Lens Intensive for SUD Recovery & Codependency · SUD RECOVERY · Defects the disease built — and releasing them · CODEPENDENCY · Patterns that love built wrong — and asking for better ones · The Garden and the Weeds

A garden full of weeds is not defective by nature — it simply hasn't been tended. The weeds grew for a reason: they are opportunistic, hardy, and they fill available space. But they crowd out what you actually want to grow. Steps Six and Seven are the gardening work: identifying what needs to come out, becoming willing to pull it, and asking for the strength to do it — knowing that the beauty that follows is worth the work.

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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 Are Steps Six and Seven? Readiness, Humility, and the Asking

Step Six: "Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character." Step Seven: "Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings."

If Steps Four and Five were about seeing yourself clearly and speaking that truth aloud, Steps Six and Seven are about what comes next — the profound and often underestimated work of becoming willing to actually change.

Step Six is the hinge between knowing and becoming. The word "entirely" is doing enormous work in that sentence. Not mostly ready. Not ready when it feels convenient. Not ready except for this one part you're holding onto. Entirely. The program asks for a completeness of readiness that most people approach gradually, honestly acknowledging the parts they are not yet willing to surrender. What is required is not the performance of perfect readiness. It is the genuine, ongoing movement toward it.

Step Seven is the action that follows readiness: the humble petition. The word "humbly" carries the accumulated wisdom of the previous six steps. Humility is not self-deprecation. It is the accurate recognition of what you are and are not: you are a person of worth and dignity who possesses limitations and patterns that cause harm and block growth. Humility says: I cannot remove these on my own — I have already tried, and the inventory is evidence of what self-directed removal produces. I need help. And I am willing to ask for it.

The language of "removal" rather than "repair" or "management" is significant. The program asks you to ask for removal — trusting that what a Higher Power can accomplish in the interior life is qualitatively different from what willpower can produce. This is not passivity. It is the recognition that genuine character transformation is a spiritual work as much as a psychological one.

Reflection Questions

1. What is your honest reaction to the word "entirely" in Step Six? What part of your readiness is genuine — and what part is still conditional?

2. What does "humility" mean to you in the context of your recovery? How is the program's definition of humility different from how the word has been used against you in the past?

3. What is the difference between trying harder to manage a character defect and actually asking for its removal? Have you experienced this difference?

4. Which of your character defects or shortcomings do you feel most ready to release? Which are you least ready — and why?

5. What would it mean for your recovery, your relationships, and your sense of self if the patterns you've identified in Steps Four and Five were genuinely removed rather than just managed?

CHECK YOURSELF · CHECK-IN 1 OF 5

Readiness for Character Change

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

1. I have completed or substantially engaged with a Step Four inventory and know what patterns I am bringing to Step Six

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

2. I am genuinely willing — not just intellectually — to have specific character defects removed rather than just managed

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

3. I can distinguish between the patterns I am ready to release and the ones I am still protecting, without pretending the second category doesn't exist

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

4. I understand that readiness is a movement, not a moment — and I am actively moving toward it rather than waiting to feel "entirely" ready

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

5. I can identify specific costs that my character defects have produced — evidence that makes the case for their removal rather than their retention

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

6. I believe that genuine character transformation is possible for me — not just behavioral improvement, but actual change at the level of who I am

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

7. I have experienced a moment in recovery when a previously automatic defect became something I could pause and choose differently — evidence that change is real

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

8. I am willing to examine the parts of my character defects that I still find useful or comforting, rather than pretending I am entirely ready when I am not

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

YOUR EXERCISE

Exercise 3: The Readiness Spectrum

Mapping Where You Actually Are on Each Defect

The Honest Map

'Entirely ready' exists on a spectrum. This exercise maps your actual readiness for each major character defect — from 'not ready at all' to 'entirely ready.' The goal is not to perform readiness but to see exactly where you are, so you know what to bring to prayer, sponsorship, and the Step Seven asking.

Rate your readiness to release each pattern (1 = Not ready at all, 5 = Entirely ready):

Control / hypervigilance

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

Dishonesty / manipulation

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

Resentment / bitterness

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

Pride / arrogance

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

Self-centeredness

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

People-pleasing

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

Fear-based thinking

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

Isolation / emotional avoidance

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

Enabling / codependency

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

Perfectionism / rigidity

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

Your Most Ready Defects

1. Which two or three defects scored highest on readiness? What has brought you to this degree of readiness for these specific patterns?

Write with honesty and hope...

2. For your most ready defect: what does your Step Seven prayer look like specifically for this one? Write it out — personalizing the request.

Write with honesty and hope...

3. What would your life look and feel like if this most-ready defect were substantially removed in the next year? Describe it concretely.

Write with honesty and hope...

Your Least Ready Defects

1. Which two or three defects scored lowest on readiness? What specifically makes these so defended?

Work honestly with your lowest readiness...

2. What would it take — what pain, what loss, what program work — to increase your readiness for the least-ready defect by even one point?

Work honestly with your lowest readiness...

3. Can you name an "interim prayer" for your least-ready defect — not asking for its removal (you're not ready), but asking for the willingness to become willing?

Work honestly with your lowest readiness...

PART 2 OF 6 · READING

Understanding Character Defects: Survival Patterns That Need Retiring

The language of "character defects" and "shortcomings" has generated more unnecessary shame in the recovery community than almost any other phrase in the program literature. Every pattern that ends up in a Step Six inventory arrived in your life for a reason.

Pride that became arrogance was once the armor of a child who needed dignity and found it in self-sufficiency. Dishonesty that became manipulation was once the survival strategy of someone who could not afford to be vulnerable. People-pleasing that became codependency was once the love-seeking behavior of a person who learned that approval had to be earned rather than freely given. Control that became domination was once the hypervigilance of a nervous system living in chaos. Fear that became paralysis was once the appropriate response to genuine danger.

These patterns were, in their origin, creative adaptations. They emerged from real environments, real threats, and real limitations in the support that was available. The child who learned to be invisible to survive a volatile home did not develop a "character defect" — they developed a survival skill. The problem is not that the skill was wrong then. The problem is that it is still running now, in a different environment, with different consequences, long after the original threat has passed.

Steps Six and Seven do not ask you to condemn yourself for having the patterns. They ask you to become entirely ready for them to be removed — acknowledging that you no longer need them, that their original purpose has expired, and that carrying them forward costs you more than releasing them.

The inventory is not a proof of defectiveness. It is a map of where healing is needed. The pattern that once felt completely automatic begins to feel like a choice — and that felt sense of choice is the beginning of freedom.

Reflection Questions

1. Review your Step Four inventory: which patterns can you now trace back to their origins as survival adaptations? What were they originally protecting you from?

2. Which of your defects or shortcomings do you believe is "just who I am"? How does reframing it as a survival pattern that outlived its usefulness change your relationship to it?

3. What is the difference between tolerating your patterns (knowing they exist and continuing as before) and becoming entirely ready (genuinely preparing for their removal)? Where are you in that continuum?

4. The program says removal is a spiritual work. What does that mean to you practically — what would spiritual change in your character look and feel like?

5. Which of your shortcomings has caused the most harm to others? Which has caused the most harm to yourself? Are these the same one — or different?

CHECK YOURSELF · CHECK-IN 2 OF 5

Awareness of Specific Character Patterns

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

1. I can name my top three to five character defects with precision — not vague generalities but specific patterns with specific consequences

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

2. I understand where each of my major defects originated — the experience, relationship, or environment that produced it

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

3. I can distinguish between my SUD-related character defects (products of the disease) and my codependency-related ones (products of the alcoholic system)

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

4. I understand how my character defects are interconnected — how one pattern activates another in predictable sequences

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

5. I am honest about the ways my defects continue to operate in my recovery — not only during active addiction but right now

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

6. I can identify the trigger conditions under which each defect is most likely to activate (stress, intimacy, conflict, uncertainty)

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

7. I understand the difference between a character defect (a pattern that consistently produces harm) and a normal human limitation or preference

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

8. I have discussed my character defects with a sponsor or counselor who can help me see what I cannot see alone

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

CHECK YOURSELF · CHECK-IN 3 OF 5

Attachment to Defects & Resistance to Removal

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

1. There are patterns in my character that I know cause harm but that I am not yet willing to release — and I find ways to justify keeping them

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

2. I believe that without certain defects (e.g., my need to control, my self-sufficiency, my toughness), I would be vulnerable or ineffective

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

3. I find myself more focused on other people's character defects than on working with my own

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

4. I have used the Step Six/Seven framework before but have not experienced meaningful change — and I am skeptical it will work this time

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

5. There are specific character defects that I genuinely believe are "just who I am" and therefore not subject to removal

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

6. I struggle to feel "entirely ready" because I am afraid of what my relationships or life would look like without certain patterns

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

7. I tend to substitute behavior management (controlling the expression of defects) for genuine change (asking for their removal)

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

8. My self-sufficiency makes it difficult to genuinely ask for help — even from a Higher Power — with removing my shortcomings

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

YOUR EXERCISE

Exercise 1: Character Defect Origin Mapping

Tracing Each Pattern Back to Where It Was Born

Why Origins Matter

You cannot release what you do not understand. This exercise traces each major character defect back to its origin — the experience, environment, or relationship that first made this pattern feel necessary. Understanding the origin transforms the relationship to it: from self-condemnation to compassionate clarity.

Need for Control

Common origin: Environments where chaos was the norm and hypervigilance felt like the only safety

Does this pattern appear in your life? How does it specifically manifest?

Where did YOUR version of this pattern originate?

What purpose did this pattern serve originally? What was it protecting you from?

Dishonesty / Manipulation

Common origin: Situations where the truth was dangerous or vulnerability was punished

Does this pattern appear in your life? How does it specifically manifest?

Where did YOUR version of this pattern originate?

What purpose did this pattern serve originally? What was it protecting you from?

Resentment

Common origin: Real injuries that were never processed or released, becoming chronic fuel

Does this pattern appear in your life? How does it specifically manifest?

Where did YOUR version of this pattern originate?

What purpose did this pattern serve originally? What was it protecting you from?

Pride / Arrogance

Common origin: The need to appear strong when the interior felt fragile or shameful

Does this pattern appear in your life? How does it specifically manifest?

Where did YOUR version of this pattern originate?

What purpose did this pattern serve originally? What was it protecting you from?

Self-Centeredness

Common origin: Survival requirement in chaotic or addicted systems, or the disease reorganizing the personality

Does this pattern appear in your life? How does it specifically manifest?

Where did YOUR version of this pattern originate?

What purpose did this pattern serve originally? What was it protecting you from?

People-Pleasing / Approval-Seeking

Common origin: Love that had to be earned; safety that came through pleasing rather than simply existing

Does this pattern appear in your life? How does it specifically manifest?

Where did YOUR version of this pattern originate?

What purpose did this pattern serve originally? What was it protecting you from?

Fear as a Primary Lens

Common origin: Environments where genuine threat was present and the nervous system learned to default to alarm

Does this pattern appear in your life? How does it specifically manifest?

Where did YOUR version of this pattern originate?

What purpose did this pattern serve originally? What was it protecting you from?

Isolation / Emotional Walls

Common origin: Intimacy that proved dangerous; connection that led to hurt, abandonment, or betrayal

Does this pattern appear in your life? How does it specifically manifest?

Where did YOUR version of this pattern originate?

What purpose did this pattern serve originally? What was it protecting you from?

YOUR EXERCISE

Exercise 2: What I'm Still Holding Onto — and Why

Honest Accounting of the Defects I'm Not Yet Ready to Release

Honesty Before Readiness

'Entirely ready' is the destination, not the starting point. Most people who approach Step Six honestly discover that they are ready to release some patterns and are still attached to others. You cannot work toward releasing what you haven't admitted you're holding.

Exploring My Attachments

1. List the character defects or shortcomings from your Step Four inventory that you are NOT yet entirely ready to release. Name them without judgment.

2. For the top item on that list: what specific benefit does this pattern provide you? What would you lose if it were removed? Be ruthlessly honest.

3. What fear is underneath your attachment to this pattern? What are you afraid would happen to you — in relationships, at work, in recovery — without it?

4. Where have you convinced yourself that this particular defect is "not really a defect" — that it is a strength, a necessity, or a reasonable response to your circumstances?

5. What evidence do you have that this pattern is actually costing you more than it is providing — in relationships, recovery, and quality of life?

When the Defect Feels Like Identity

The Identity Trap

The most defended defects are the ones that feel like core identity — 'This is just who I am. I'm a fighter. I'm independent. I'm the one who holds everything together.' Releasing the pattern does not erase the self — it reveals a deeper, more authentic self underneath.

1. Which of your character defects has become most fused with your sense of identity? What would it mean to your self-concept to release it?

2. What do you imagine people would think of you — or how would your relationships change — if this pattern were removed? Are those imagined consequences realistic?

3. Is there a version of yourself that you can glimpse underneath this pattern — someone who could function well, relate authentically, and recover fully without it? Describe that person.

4. What would it take for you to believe that the "you" underneath this pattern is worth trusting — that releasing the armor reveals something worth knowing?

YOUR EXERCISE

Exercise 6: Defect Trigger Mapping

When and Where Do Your Defects Activate?

Awareness Before Asking

Step Seven asks for removal. But the asking becomes most powerful when it is specific — when you know exactly which defect activates in which situation. This exercise maps your trigger-defect sequences so that your Step Seven prayer becomes a targeted act of spiritual precision.

Interpersonal Conflict

SUD Recovery

Control, resentment, or rage activates — the instinct to win, retaliate, or withdraw

Codependency

People-pleasing surges; the pattern of self-suppression to avoid rupture activates

In this trigger situation, which specific defect activates most reliably for you?

What would the paused, Step-Seven version of this trigger look like?

Uncertainty & Loss of Control

SUD Recovery

Grandiosity or impulsivity fires — "I can manage this" without adequate data

Codependency

Hypervigilance activates; the scanning, monitoring, calculating compulsion spikes

In this trigger situation, which specific defect activates most reliably for you?

What would the paused, Step-Seven version of this trigger look like?

Intimacy & Closeness

SUD Recovery

Isolation or emotional walls go up; the terror of being known triggers the exit

Codependency

Rescuing or approval-seeking activates; genuine closeness gets replaced by caretaking

In this trigger situation, which specific defect activates most reliably for you?

What would the paused, Step-Seven version of this trigger look like?

Failure or Criticism

SUD Recovery

Self-pity or pride fires — either collapsing into victimhood or defending against all feedback

Codependency

Shame activates; the sense that failing here confirms fundamental unworthiness

In this trigger situation, which specific defect activates most reliably for you?

What would the paused, Step-Seven version of this trigger look like?

High Stress or Exhaustion

SUD Recovery

Craving activates alongside the oldest coping pattern: find relief now

Codependency

Martyrdom or resentment spikes; the cost of over-functioning becomes unbearable

In this trigger situation, which specific defect activates most reliably for you?

What would the paused, Step-Seven version of this trigger look like?

PART 3 OF 6 · READING

Steps Six & Seven — The SUD Lens: The Defects the Disease Built

For the person in SUD recovery, the character defects that emerge in Steps Four through Seven typically fall into recognizable patterns — patterns that addiction both produced and depended upon.

Self-centeredness is often listed first in the program literature, and for good reason: active addiction reorganizes the entire personality around the needs of the disease. Other people's needs, feelings, and wellbeing are processed through the filter of how they affect the disease's agenda. This is not a moral failure in the ordinary sense; it is the neurological reality of addiction as a disease of the reward system. But in recovery, the self-centeredness that served the disease now undermines every relationship and every recovery practice.

Dishonesty — habitual, automatic, sometimes exhaustive — is another common feature of the addicted character. The person with SUD learns to lie with facility: about their using, about their intentions, about their whereabouts, about their feelings. The lie became so practiced that honesty can feel unfamiliar, even dangerous, well into sobriety.

Resentment, fear, and the grandiosity that masks both are the emotional infrastructure of addiction. The resentment keeps others at fault, which keeps the disease protected. The fear generates the pressure that the substance relieves. The grandiosity ("I can handle this," "the rules don't apply to me") provides the insulation against honest accounting.

For many people in SUD recovery, there is a specific set of defects related to intimacy and vulnerability: the inability to ask for help, the habit of isolating rather than connecting, the performance of strength while drowning, the terror of genuine closeness. Becoming ready to let these go is, quite literally, a matter of survival.

Reflection Questions

1. From your Step Four inventory: which character defects are most clearly products of your addiction — patterns the disease needed in order to survive?

2. Which defect do you feel most ready to release? What has reaching "ready" required in terms of pain, consequences, and Step work?

3. Where do you find the defect of self-centeredness still operating in your recovery — in your relationships, your program participation, your thinking?

4. What would honest, habitual, automatic honesty look like in your daily life — specifically? What would change?

5. What does "intimacy with help-seeking" look like for you — the ability to ask for support before crisis? Where does that defect still resist removal?

YOUR EXERCISE

Exercise 4: SUD-Specific Defects Inventory

The Patterns the Disease Needed — and What They Cost

The Disease's Character Requirements

Addiction is not simply a physical dependence — it is a reorganization of personality around the disease's requirements. Each of these defects served the disease in a specific way. Step Six asks: are you ready to stop serving the disease — not just with your body, but with your character?

Denial

The deep, often unconscious refusal to see the full reality of the disease and its consequences

How did this defect serve your active addiction? What function did it perform?

Is this defect still operating in your recovery — even without the substance? Give a recent example.

Grandiosity

"I'm different," "I can handle it," "The rules don't apply to me." The insulation against honest self-assessment

How did this defect serve your active addiction? What function did it perform?

Is this defect still operating in your recovery — even without the substance? Give a recent example.

Impulsivity

Acting on urge rather than reflection; the failure to pause between stimulus and response that enabled the disease

How did this defect serve your active addiction? What function did it perform?

Is this defect still operating in your recovery — even without the substance? Give a recent example.

Self-Pity

The internal narrative that justifies the using: I've been through so much, I deserve this relief

How did this defect serve your active addiction? What function did it perform?

Is this defect still operating in your recovery — even without the substance? Give a recent example.

Entitlement

The belief that you should not have to experience discomfort, delay, or difficulty — especially in recovery

How did this defect serve your active addiction? What function did it perform?

Is this defect still operating in your recovery — even without the substance? Give a recent example.

Habitual Dishonesty

The automatic lie — to self, loved ones, counselors — that became second nature in active addiction

How did this defect serve your active addiction? What function did it perform?

Is this defect still operating in your recovery — even without the substance? Give a recent example.

PART 4 OF 6 · READING

Steps Six & Seven — The Codependency Lens: The Patterns That Love Built Wrong

For the person in codependency recovery, Steps Six and Seven carry a particular complexity — because many of the patterns that arrive in the inventory originated in love, or in something that felt like love. The controlling behavior came from genuine concern. The enabling came from real compassion. The people-pleasing came from the deep desire to preserve a relationship that mattered.

When the defects are rooted in love, becoming entirely ready to have them removed can feel like becoming ready to stop caring. The first clarification is essential: releasing the patterns is not the same as releasing the love. The alcoholic system taught you a specific expression of love — one organized around management, rescue, and the suppression of your own needs in service of someone else's disease. That expression is what the step asks you to release. Underneath it, the love itself can remain — and in fact, it becomes more genuine and more truly helpful when it is no longer expressed through control and self-abandonment.

Step Seven in the codependency context involves a specific and particularly difficult act of humility: acknowledging that you cannot fix yourself through harder effort. This is difficult for codependent members because harder effort has been the primary strategy their whole lives. The program's invitation is to try something different entirely: instead of working harder to suppress the control pattern, you ask for its removal.

The deepest gift of Steps Six and Seven for the codependent person is the gradual discovery of what remains when the controlling, enabling, and people-pleasing patterns begin to lift. What remains is you — your actual preferences, your authentic responses, your genuine needs, your real voice. For many people in codependency recovery, the experience of Steps Six and Seven is the first time they begin to meet themselves.

Reflection Questions

1. Which codependency patterns from your Step Four inventory feel most ready to be released? What has brought you to readiness?

2. Which patterns feel least ready — the ones you are still holding with both hands? What are you afraid will happen if they are removed?

3. How do you distinguish between releasing the pattern (the controlling behavior, the enabling) and releasing the love? Can the love survive without the pattern?

4. Where has harder effort made your codependency patterns worse rather than better? What would it look like to stop trying harder and start asking for removal?

5. What do you imagine you would find underneath the patterns — when the controlling, enabling, and people-pleasing begin to lift? What version of yourself do you glimpse there?

YOUR EXERCISE

Exercise 5: Codependency-Specific Defects Inventory

The Patterns Love Built Wrong — Readiness to Rebuild Them Right

Not Defects of Malice

These patterns were built from love, fear, and the genuine desire to hold something together that kept threatening to fall apart. The invitation of Steps Six and Seven is not to condemn these patterns but to become ready to replace them with something better — a love that doesn't require self-destruction, a care that doesn't require control.

Rescuing / Compulsive Caretaking

The inability to allow others to face their own consequences; the compulsion to fix, prevent, and manage

How has this pattern shown up in your relationship with the alcoholic — specific examples?

What is the opposite of this pattern — the virtue you would like in its place?

Self-Abandonment

The systematic erasure of your own needs, preferences, and truth in service of someone else's emotional state

How has this pattern shown up in your relationship with the alcoholic — specific examples?

What is the opposite of this pattern — the virtue you would like in its place?

Approval Addiction

Organizing your self-worth entirely around other people's responses — their approval generates worth, disapproval generates shame

How has this pattern shown up in your relationship with the alcoholic — specific examples?

What is the opposite of this pattern — the virtue you would like in its place?

Martyrdom

Self-sacrifice performed with a hidden score — giving with resentment, serving with unexpressed expectation

How has this pattern shown up in your relationship with the alcoholic — specific examples?

What is the opposite of this pattern — the virtue you would like in its place?

Hypervigilance

The nervous system always scanning for threat, always monitoring, never fully at rest — even when the original threat is past

How has this pattern shown up in your relationship with the alcoholic — specific examples?

What is the opposite of this pattern — the virtue you would like in its place?

Over-Responsibility

Taking on what belongs to others — their feelings, their choices, their consequences — as if you could carry what is not yours

How has this pattern shown up in your relationship with the alcoholic — specific examples?

What is the opposite of this pattern — the virtue you would like in its place?

PART 5 OF 6 · READING

The Humility of Step Seven: Asking as an Act of Courage

The word "humbly" sits at the center of Step Seven and deserves far more attention than it typically receives. In a culture that valorizes self-sufficiency and frames asking for help as weakness, the humility of Step Seven is a quietly radical act.

Humility, as the program uses the term, has nothing to do with self-degradation. It is not the statement "I am worthless" or "I deserve nothing." Those are shame, not humility. Humility is accurate self-knowledge — the clear-eyed recognition of both your limitations and your worth. The humble person knows they are not God. They know they cannot produce by force what requires grace. And they know — this is the equally important half — that they are worthy of the help they are asking for.

The Seventh Step Prayer in the Big Book tradition is often used in Al-Anon as well: "My Creator, I am now willing that you should have all of me, good and bad. I pray that you now remove from me every single defect of character which stands in the way of my usefulness to you and my fellows. Grant me strength as I go out from here to do your bidding. Amen."

For those who resist traditional prayer language, the essence of Step Seven can be expressed in many ways. What is essential is the asking — the sincere, humble, honest request to something larger than yourself for help with what you cannot accomplish alone. Every moment of genuine pause before a habitual defect is expressed is a micro-practice of Step Seven — a small act of asking, lived in real time.

The change that Steps Six and Seven produce is rarely dramatic or instantaneous. It is usually gradual and nonlinear. People who have worked these steps for years describe a felt sense of increasing spaciousness — the sense that the patterns which once felt like walls have become doors, and that the doors are more frequently open.

Reflection Questions

1. What does humility feel like in your body — not shame, not self-degradation, but the honest recognition of limitation alongside genuine dignity? Have you ever felt it?

2. Write a personalized version of Step Seven's asking — in your own language, addressed to your own understanding of a Higher Power. What specifically are you asking to have removed?

3. Where has self-sufficiency — the refusal to ask for help — cost you the most in your recovery and your relationships?

4. What does it mean that every moment of pausing before a habitual defect is a micro-practice of Step Seven? Where did you practice this today, however imperfectly?

5. Looking back from where you are now: what character patterns have already begun to shift in your recovery — evidence that the process is working even when you cannot see it?

CHECK YOURSELF · CHECK-IN 4 OF 5

Humility & Genuine Asking Capacity

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

1. I can ask for help — from my Higher Power, sponsor, or community — without experiencing it as defeat or weakness

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

2. I have a working prayer or petition practice that I bring to Step Seven genuinely rather than as a formula

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

3. I understand the difference between humility (accurate self-knowledge with dignity) and shame (self-condemnation)

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

4. I can acknowledge my limitations honestly without either minimizing them or collapsing into self-punishment

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

5. I have experienced moments of genuine humility in recovery — the felt sense of needing and receiving something larger than my own will

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

6. I am more focused on becoming useful to others than on protecting my own image or managing my reputation

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

7. I can say "I was wrong" and "I need help" in real time, rather than only in retrospect during an inventory

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

8. The Seventh Step prayer — or my own version of it — feels like something I can mean, not just recite

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

YOUR EXERCISE

Exercise 7: My Step Seven Prayer — Personal and Living

Writing the Asking in Your Own Language

The Prayer That Means Something

The Seventh Step Prayer from the Big Book is a starting point, not a requirement. What the step asks for is genuine, humble asking — and genuine asking sounds like you.

THE TRADITIONAL SEVENTH STEP PRAYER

"My Creator, I am now willing that you should have all of me, good and bad. I pray that you now remove from me every single defect of character which stands in the way of my usefulness to you and my fellows. Grant me strength as I go out from here to do your bidding. Amen."

Writing My Personal Step Seven Prayer

Write a Step Seven prayer in your own language — addressed to your own understanding of a Higher Power. It should name your specific defects, your specific hope, and your genuine willingness.

[Your Higher Power], I come to you today with the willingness I have — not the perfection I don't. I ask you to remove from me... I offer you my... I am asking for... because I want to become someone who...

The Willingness to Become Willing

For the defects you are not yet entirely ready to release — write an "interim prayer": asking not for removal (since you're not ready), but for the willingness to become willing.

"[Higher Power], I am not yet entirely ready to release my [defect]. I am asking you today not for its removal, but for the willingness to become willing. Help me to see what it is costing me...

PART 6 OF 6 · READING

Living Six and Seven: The Ongoing Practice of Readiness and Asking

Steps Six and Seven are not milestones to be passed and left behind. They are — like all of the steps — practices to be lived forward, returned to, and deepened as recovery progresses and new layers of the self become accessible.

Many people in long-term recovery describe the experience of steps cycling through: a period of relative peace, followed by the surfacing of a pattern that requires fresh inventory, fresh readiness, and fresh asking. This is not failure. It is the nature of spiritual growth, which tends to proceed in spirals rather than straight lines.

The daily practice of Steps Six and Seven shares a common structure: the morning intention, the noticing, and the evening release. In the morning, many people find it useful to identify the specific defect most likely to be active that day and to make the explicit request: "Help me with this today. I am not doing this on my own." This is a Step Seven prayer in its most minimal form, but it is sufficient.

The noticing is the practice of awareness: the ability to catch the pattern in the moment of its activation, before it has fully expressed, and to pause. The pause is everything. Between the stimulus and the response, there is a moment — tiny, fleeting, but real — in which the alternative is visible.

The evening release is the completion of the daily cycle: a brief review of where the defects were active, where they were interrupted, and where they remain. Combined with a renewed request: "Help me with this tomorrow. I am still not doing this on my own." That sentence is the ongoing heartbeat of Step Seven, available every evening to every person in recovery, regardless of how long they have been working the program.

Reflection Questions

1. What would a daily "Step Six and Seven practice" look like for you — morning intention, noticing, evening release? Be specific about what it would include.

2. Where are you most likely to need a Step Seven prayer today — what specific situation or relationship is most likely to activate a character defect?

3. How do you experience the pause between stimulus and response? Is it available to you — even briefly — in your most challenging situations? What helps it open?

4. What does the community of your recovery provide that makes the ongoing practice of Six and Seven possible? What do you need more of?

5. Looking back over your recovery: what evidence do you have that the process of readiness and asking is actually working — that character patterns are genuinely changing, not just being suppressed?

CHECK YOURSELF · CHECK-IN 5 OF 5

Step Six & Seven Capacity — Spiritual & Recovery Strengths

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

1. I have a working relationship with a Higher Power that I can bring my character defects to in genuine petition

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

2. I have seen evidence — in my own life or in the lives of others in recovery — that character transformation through spiritual willingness is real

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

3. I have a sponsor, spiritual director, or counselor with whom I am actively working Steps Six and Seven

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

4. I practice regular morning and evening reflection that includes awareness of character patterns and petition for their removal

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

5. I have a community of recovery where I can be honest about my defects without pretending they are gone

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

6. I am growing in my capacity to pause between stimulus and response — the space in which Step Seven's work becomes visible

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

7. I understand that the removal of character defects is a process, not an event, and I have enough patience for that process

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

8. I believe I am worthy of the character transformation that Steps Six and Seven offer — that it is available to me specifically

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

YOUR EXERCISE

Exercise 8: Defects to Virtues — The Replacement Map

What Grows in the Space the Defect Leaves

The Garden Metaphor Completed

When the weeds are pulled, the garden doesn't stay empty — it fills with what was intended to grow there all along. Step Seven doesn't just ask for the removal of defects; it creates the conditions for virtues to grow in their place.

Control / hypervigilance → Trust & appropriate release

The capacity to allow situations and people to unfold without managing them — rooted in genuine faith rather than fear

What this defect currently costs me:

What this virtue would give me:

Have I glimpsed this virtue in myself at any point — even briefly? When, and what was it like?

Dishonesty / manipulation → Rigorous honesty

The willingness to tell the truth — about yourself, your situation, and your needs — even when honesty feels dangerous

What this defect currently costs me:

What this virtue would give me:

Have I glimpsed this virtue in myself at any point — even briefly? When, and what was it like?

Resentment → Forgiveness & release

Not excusing harm, but releasing the grip of grievance — freeing your own energy from the past

What this defect currently costs me:

What this virtue would give me:

Have I glimpsed this virtue in myself at any point — even briefly? When, and what was it like?

Pride / arrogance → Genuine humility

Accurate self-knowledge that includes both limitation and worth — neither inflated nor deflated

What this defect currently costs me:

What this virtue would give me:

Have I glimpsed this virtue in myself at any point — even briefly? When, and what was it like?

Self-centeredness → Service & other-orientation

The capacity to be genuinely interested in and useful to others — not as a performance but as a way of living

What this defect currently costs me:

What this virtue would give me:

Have I glimpsed this virtue in myself at any point — even briefly? When, and what was it like?

People-pleasing → Authentic self-expression

The willingness to express your actual preferences, needs, and truth — regardless of anticipated responses

What this defect currently costs me:

What this virtue would give me:

Have I glimpsed this virtue in myself at any point — even briefly? When, and what was it like?

Fear-based thinking → Courage & faith

Taking right action even in the presence of fear — trusting that the outcome is not entirely your responsibility to manage

What this defect currently costs me:

What this virtue would give me:

Have I glimpsed this virtue in myself at any point — even briefly? When, and what was it like?

Enabling / codependency → Detachment with love

Caring deeply without managing; allowing others the dignity of their own choices and consequences

What this defect currently costs me:

What this virtue would give me:

Have I glimpsed this virtue in myself at any point — even briefly? When, and what was it like?

YOUR EXERCISE

Exercise 9: Daily Six & Seven Practice

Seven Days of Living Readiness and Asking

Readiness and Asking as Daily Practice

Steps Six and Seven are not completed once and filed. They are lived — each morning in the asking, each afternoon in the noticing, each evening in the honest review.

Day 1: Step Six — What Am I Ready to Release?

Begin today by naming the defect you are most ready to release. Sit with the readiness — where does it live in your body? What does being ready feel like, rather than just think like?

Morning Intention: My Step Seven asking for today:

Evening Review: Where did the defect activate — and what happened?

Day 2: Step Seven — The Morning Petition

Before the day begins, use your personal Step Seven prayer. Speak it aloud if possible. Then notice: what situation today is most likely to require the removal you just asked for?

Morning Intention: My Step Seven asking for today:

Evening Review: Where did the defect activate — and what happened?

Day 3: The Trigger Watch

Focus today on watching for your most reliable trigger-defect sequence. When it activates, pause — even for five seconds. Notice you paused. That pause is Step Seven lived in real time.

Morning Intention: My Step Seven asking for today:

Evening Review: Where did the defect activate — and what happened?

Day 4: What I'm Still Holding

Give honest attention today to the defect you are least ready to release. Sit with the attachment without judgment. What specifically would it take to move one step toward readiness?

Morning Intention: My Step Seven asking for today:

Evening Review: Where did the defect activate — and what happened?

Day 5: Virtue Recognition

Look for evidence today that a virtue is growing in the space a defect is vacating. Where did you respond differently than you would have a year ago? Acknowledge it.

Morning Intention: My Step Seven asking for today:

Evening Review: Where did the defect activate — and what happened?

Day 6: Community and Step Seven

Share your Step Six and Seven work with someone in your recovery community today — your sponsor, a trusted member, or your group. Name a defect you are working to release.

Morning Intention: My Step Seven asking for today:

Evening Review: Where did the defect activate — and what happened?

Day 7: Weekly Integration

Looking back at the week: where was the readiness real? Where was it still conditional? Where did the asking actually show up in your behavior — the pause, the choice, the alternative response?

Morning Intention: My Step Seven asking for today:

Evening Review: Where did the defect activate — and what happened?

YOUR EXERCISE

Exercise 10: My Steps Six & Seven Commitment

Readiness Named. Asking Made. Change Begun.

From Intensive to Life

You have done the work of this intensive: the reading, the assessment, the mapping, the praying. The final exercise is the synthesis — a living commitment that names your specific readiness, your specific asking, and the specific change you are working toward.

What This Intensive Revealed

1. From the reading: what was the single most important insight about Steps Six and Seven that shifted your understanding?

2. From the assessment: what did you discover about your specific readiness and resistance that you had not clearly seen before?

3. From the worksheets: which exercise was most challenging — and therefore most important? What did it reveal?

4. What do you know now, having done this work, that you did not know when you began?

My Steps Six & Seven Declaration

Write your personal declaration — in your own language — declaring your readiness, naming what you are releasing, and committing to the ongoing practice of asking.

I am now entirely ready — or moving toward being entirely ready — to have these patterns removed from me. I declare readiness for... I am still building readiness for... I humbly ask my Higher Power to... I am committed to the daily practice of...

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

"Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings."

The patterns that have organized your life were built for reasons that made sense once. And now, having seen them clearly in the inventory and spoken them aloud in Step Five, you have arrived at the moment of genuine readiness, and the humble, repeated, daily act of asking. The garden is being cleared. What grows in its place is already there, waiting. The asking simply makes room.