

Steps Ten, Eleven & Twelve

Al-Anon Deep Dive · The Recovery Files

Al-Anon Maintenance Steps — Recovery Becomes a Life

"Continued to take personal inventory..."

A Dual-Lens Intensive for SUD Recovery & Codependency · SUD RECOVERY · Daily inventory, conscious contact & carrying sobriety forward · CODEPENDENCY · Monitoring control patterns, serenity practice & detached service · The Garden in Full Season

"Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact..."

"Having had a spiritual awakening... tried to carry this message to others..."

The first nine steps cleared the ground, pulled the weeds, and prepared the soil. Steps Ten, Eleven, and Twelve are the ongoing tending of the garden — the daily watering, the regular pruning, the seasonal deepening that keeps what was planted alive and growing. The work is never finished. But the garden, tended faithfully, keeps producing — season after season.

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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

Steps Ten, Eleven & Twelve: The Maintenance Steps — How Recovery Becomes a Life

Step Ten: "Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it."

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

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

The first nine steps are often described as the work of clearing away the wreckage of the past. Steps Ten, Eleven, and Twelve are something qualitatively different. They are the architecture of the recovered life itself — the daily practices, the spiritual disciplines, and the outward movement that keep the first nine steps alive and prevent the accumulated damage of a new unworked inventory from rebuilding what was so carefully dismantled.

Step Ten is the daily practice of inventory applied to the present — a continuous, honest monitoring of your own patterns, motives, and behavior as they unfold in daily life. The word "promptly" is the step's most demanding feature: it asks that when you are wrong, you admit it in real time — not in tomorrow's meeting, not in next month's step work, but now.

Step Eleven is the deepening of the spiritual relationship that has been central to the program since Step Two. It asks not simply for belief, but for an ongoing practice — prayer and meditation as regular, disciplined, daily habits. The step's specific language — "praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out" — is a radical reorientation: it exchanges the prayer of request for the prayer of alignment.

Step Twelve is the outward arc of the entire program — the moment when recovery stops being only about you and becomes a gift that you carry forward to others. The spiritual awakening that the step describes is the cumulative transformation that the preceding eleven steps have produced: a new freedom, a new honesty, a new capacity for relationships.

Reflection Questions

1. What does "maintenance steps" mean to you — not as a diminishment of the work, but as a description of what recovery lived forward actually looks like?

2. Which of the three steps feels most natural or accessible to you? Which feels most challenging or underdeveloped?

3. What would it mean for your recovery to have a genuine daily inventory practice — not a periodic review but a continuous, honest monitoring of your present patterns?

4. How has your understanding of prayer changed — or not yet changed — as you have moved through the steps? Does the language of "praying only for knowledge of His will" feel liberating or threatening?

5. What does "spiritual awakening as the result of these steps" mean to you? What transformation — however gradual — do you notice in yourself that is evidence of that awakening?

YOUR EXERCISE

Exercise 9: 30-Day Maintenance Practice Plan

Four Weeks of Living Steps Ten, Eleven & Twelve

Practice Makes the Practice

A maintenance step practice that has been deliberately built over 30 days is qualitatively different from one assembled from good intentions and irregular effort. This four-week plan builds all three maintenance steps sequentially and then integrates them.

Week 1: Step Ten Foundation

Day 1

Begin your daily inventory practice today. Use your format from Exercise 1. Write the first entry — seven questions, honest answers, one prompt amend identified.

Day 2

Practice the spot-check today in at least one trigger situation. Notice the internal sequence before you respond. Write about what you noticed.

Day 3

Identify a pattern that has shown up more than once this week. Name it, trace it, and connect it to specific step work.

Day 4

Where were you wrong today — and did you admit it promptly? If yes, write about what the prompt admission felt like. If not — make the amend now.

Day 5

Write a brief weekly inventory: what recurring pattern showed up most this week? What specific inventory question would catch it most reliably?

Day 6

Share your week's inventory practice with your sponsor or a trusted program member. What did they observe that you did not?

Day 7

Rest and reflect. What has one week of daily inventory shown you about your current recovery? What is the most important pattern to watch next week?

Week 2: Step Eleven Deepening

Day 8

Day 1 of deliberate Step Eleven focus. Practice your morning prayer using the language of "knowledge of will and power to carry it out." Write what came up.

Day 9

Add five minutes of silence to your morning practice — not silence for thinking, but silence for receiving. Write what it was like to be still.

Day 10

Use the Serenity Prayer three times today — morning, at a moment of difficulty, and at evening. Write about the difference in how each felt.

Day 11

Pray specifically for someone you are in conflict with — not for them to change, but for yourself to respond with recovery principles. Write about this.

Day 12

Where did conscious contact show up today — a moment of genuine connection to your Higher Power? Even small and brief — name it.

Day 13

Try a different form of meditation or prayer today — one you don't normally use. Write about what it was like and what, if anything, you found.

Day 14

Two weeks in: how has your Step Eleven practice changed in these fourteen days? What has improved? What remains most difficult?

Week 3: Step Twelve Expression

Day 15

Identify one concrete Step Twelve service action you will take this week — sharing in a meeting, reaching out to a newcomer, sponsoring check-in, service role.

Day 16

Practice principles in an affair they don't normally reach — a workplace situation, a parenting moment, or a friendship interaction. Write about what happened.

Day 17

Write the message you carry. What would you tell someone in your exact situation, one year into recovery, about what you have found?

Day 18

Check your service for codependency drift. Where are you carrying the person rather than the message? What adjustment is needed?

Day 19

Identify one person in your life — not in the program — who has been affected by your recovery. What have they witnessed? What evidence of awakening do they hold?

Day 20

Practice principles in the affair that is most difficult — the domain of your life where the program has the least foothold. Write about what "least foothold" looks like.

Day 21

Three weeks in: what is the awakening evidence gathering in your daily life? Name three specific, concrete changes that did not exist before recovery.

Week 4: Integration — The Recovered Life

Day 22

Full integration day: practice all three maintenance steps deliberately — inventory in the morning, conscious contact at midday, service or principles in the afternoon.

Day 23

Write a letter to the program — what it has given you, what you continue to need from it, and what you are committed to giving back.

Day 24

Look back across twenty-three days of this practice. What has been most valuable? What has been most avoided? What do you now know about your recovery that you didn't three weeks ago?

Day 25

Talk to your sponsor about the maintenance steps. Where do they see your practice from the outside — what do they observe that you might not see yourself?

Day 26

Write about the specific freedom you are experiencing in your recovery today — the freedom that the steps have produced, named as specifically and concretely as possible.

Day 27

What does your recovered life look like right now — not as aspiration but as reality? What exists today that would have been unimaginable when you arrived?

Day 28

Commitment day. Write your 30-day integration declaration — how you will continue to practice Steps Ten, Eleven, and Twelve as the ongoing architecture of your recovered life.

PART 2 OF 6 · READING

Step Ten: The Daily Inventory — Keeping the Ledger Current

Step Ten asks something deceptively simple and genuinely difficult: stay current with yourself. Do not allow new wreckage to accumulate on top of the old that was cleared in the first nine steps. When you are wrong — in thought, word, action, or pattern — admit it promptly.

The daily inventory is not a punishment. It is a brief, honest, regular accounting of how your character and your recovery are operating in real time — a kind of spiritual vital-signs check that asks: where was I today? Where did the old patterns surface? Where did I handle something well? Where do I owe an amend?

There are three commonly used forms of the Step Ten inventory. The spot-check inventory is the real-time practice — the moment of pause in the middle of a difficult conversation, the breath before responding to a provocation. The daily review is the end-of-day practice — a brief, honest accounting of the day's significant emotional and relational moments. The periodic inventory is the deeper practice — the monthly or quarterly review that examines patterns across time.

The word "promptly" carries the full clinical and spiritual weight of this step. Delayed admission allows rationalization to build, the defensive story to solidify, the relationship to calcify around a resentment that could have been dissolved immediately. The prompt admission — "I was wrong about that, I'm sorry" — said today demonstrates that recovery has produced a person who can acknowledge error without it constituting an existential threat.

For codependency recovery, Step Ten has a specific additional dimension: the inventory of codependency patterns in the present. Not just "was I resentful today" but "did I control someone today who had the right to make their own choice? Did I enable behavior that my recovery calls me to allow natural consequences? Did I suppress my own voice to manage someone else's emotional state?"

Reflection Questions

1. Do you currently have a daily inventory practice? If so, describe it honestly — what it actually looks like versus what you wish it looked like. If not, what has gotten in the way?

2. Where do you most struggle with the "promptly" — the situations or relationships in which you most resist immediate admission when you are wrong?

3. What is the difference for you between a Step Ten inventory and rumination, guilt rehearsal, or self-punishment? How do you stay on the healthy side of that line?

4. For codependency recovery: what does a daily codependency inventory look and sound like for you? What specific patterns are most important to monitor in real time?

5. What does it feel like — in your body, your relationships, your sense of yourself — when you end a day with no unaddressed wrongs, nothing left unsaid that should be said?

CHECK YOURSELF · CHECK-IN 1 OF 5

Step Ten — Daily Inventory Practice

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

1. I have a consistent daily inventory practice — I review my emotional and relational patterns at least at the end of each day

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

2. When I am wrong in a relationship — whether in word, tone, or action — I am able to admit it promptly rather than waiting for a more convenient moment

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

3. I can distinguish between a healthy Step Ten inventory and self-punishing rumination or guilt rehearsal

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

4. I monitor my specific recovery-relevant patterns daily: resentment, fear, dishonesty, and self-centeredness (SUD); control, enabling, self-abandonment (codependency)

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

5. I address wrongs promptly rather than allowing them to accumulate and require a fresh comprehensive inventory

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

6. I include both negative and positive accounting in my daily review — where I struggled and where I handled things well

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

7. My daily inventory is connected to action — I do not only note what went wrong but also identify what needs to be addressed and with whom

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

8. I understand that Step Ten is relapse prevention — that the daily inventory keeps me from building the emotional conditions that historically preceded using or codependency escalation

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

YOUR EXERCISE

Exercise 1: My Daily Inventory Format

Building a Practice That Actually Happens

The Practice That Fits Your Life

The best daily inventory format is the one you will actually do. A five-minute daily practice done consistently is worth more than a perfect system done twice a month.

Designing My Daily Inventory

1. What time of day is most realistic for your daily inventory — morning, evening, or a natural pause in the day? What has your experience shown about what actually happens versus what you plan?

Design your practice honestly...

2. What format works best for you — written journal, spoken aloud to yourself, mental review, or conversation with a sponsor?

Design your practice honestly...

3. How long do you need — what is the minimum viable daily inventory that keeps you current without becoming a burdensome ritual?

Design your practice honestly...

SUD Recovery Daily Inventory Questions

SUD Recovery

These are the questions most central to SUD recovery's daily inventory — the patterns most likely to produce relapse conditions if left unexamined.

Codependency

Use these in parallel with the codependency questions below. Both sets are relevant if both recovery paths are part of your work.

1. Was I resentful toward anyone today? If so, did I address it — or am I holding it?

2. Was I dishonest — with anyone, in any situation, even minimally? What did I conceal or distort?

3. Was I self-centered today — focused primarily on my own needs and agenda at the expense of others?

4. Was I afraid — and did I allow fear to drive a behavior or decision I regret?

5. Did I isolate — withdraw from connection when connection was available and needed?

6. Did I take a prompt amend when I was wrong? If not — who do I owe one, and when will I make it?

7. Where did I practice my recovery well today — where was I honest, humble, or appropriately connected?

Codependency Recovery Daily Inventory Questions

1. Did I try to control or manage a situation or person that was not mine to manage? How?

2. Did I enable behavior I know my recovery calls me to allow natural consequences for?

3. Did I suppress my own voice, needs, or truth to manage someone else's emotional state?

4. Did I take on a problem, responsibility, or feeling that genuinely belongs to someone else?

5. Did I check on the alcoholic's behavior or whereabouts in a way driven by anxiety rather than genuine need?

6. Did I practice detachment with love today — caring about someone while respecting their autonomy?

7. Where did my serenity hold today — where was I genuinely at peace even in difficult circumstances?

My Inventory Commitment

1. Write out your personal daily inventory format — the specific questions you will use, when you will do it, and in what form.

Be specific and realistic...

2. What accountability structure will support your daily practice — sponsor check-in, app, journal, or conversation?

Be specific and realistic...

3. What will you do when you miss a day — how will you return to practice without making the miss into a reason to abandon the practice?

Be specific and realistic...

YOUR EXERCISE

Exercise 2: The Spot-Check Inventory

Real-Time Awareness in the Moments That Matter Most

The Pause That Changes Everything

The spot-check inventory is Step Ten lived in real time — the moment of internal awareness that precedes the response. It is not a lengthy review; it is a breath, a question, a brief honest acknowledgment: 'What is happening in me right now, and is it driving me toward my recovery or away from it?'

During interpersonal conflict

SUD Recovery

Check for resentment, defensiveness, the urge to win or retaliate

Codependency

Check for control impulse, the urge to manage the other person's response

In this situation, what typically happens inside you — what is the immediate internal response before you act?

What is the recovery response — what does choosing the recovery path look like in this specific situation?

When anxiety spikes unexpectedly

SUD Recovery

Check for the craving to relieve discomfort through old patterns

Codependency

Check for the urge to check on or control the alcoholic as anxiety management

In this situation, what typically happens inside you — what is the immediate internal response before you act?

What is the recovery response — what does choosing the recovery path look like in this specific situation?

When you receive criticism or feedback

SUD Recovery

Check for pride, grandiosity, or the defensive dismissal of accurate information

Codependency

Check for shame collapse, people-pleasing escalation, or approval-seeking activation

In this situation, what typically happens inside you — what is the immediate internal response before you act?

What is the recovery response — what does choosing the recovery path look like in this specific situation?

When you are alone and struggling

SUD Recovery

Check for isolation, self-pity, and the first movement toward old using thoughts

Codependency

Check for the loss of self that happens when the codependent relationship is absent

In this situation, what typically happens inside you — what is the immediate internal response before you act?

What is the recovery response — what does choosing the recovery path look like in this specific situation?

When things are going unusually well

SUD Recovery

Check for complacency, overconfidence, and the "I've got this" drift away from the program

Codependency

Check for the anxiety that arises when calm feels unfamiliar — the body's learned mistrust of peace

In this situation, what typically happens inside you — what is the immediate internal response before you act?

What is the recovery response — what does choosing the recovery path look like in this specific situation?

Spot-Check Inventory Summary

1. In which trigger situation is the spot-check most available to you — where the pause actually opens before the old pattern fires?

2. In which situation is the spot-check most difficult — where the trigger is so fast or so strong that awareness arrives after the response rather than before?

3. Write a personalized spot-check question — the one internal question that, if you asked it in any difficult moment, would most reliably interrupt the old pattern and open the recovery response.

YOUR EXERCISE

Exercise 3: Recurring Pattern Mapping

Step Ten's Periodic Inventory — Looking for What Keeps Coming Back

The Pattern That Returns

The periodic inventory looks for patterns that the daily review might miss: the character defect that keeps reappearing in different situations, the relationship dynamic that keeps recreating itself, the spiritual drift that has been slow and gradual enough to be invisible until you look back across a longer span.

My Three Most Recurring Patterns

Pattern 1:

Name the pattern:

What is the recurring pattern — in one or two sentences?

Where and when does it most reliably appear?

Specific situations, relationships, or conditions that activate this pattern...

What step work does this pattern point to?

Connect the pattern to specific step work...

Pattern 2:

Name the pattern:

What is the recurring pattern — in one or two sentences?

Where and when does it most reliably appear?

Specific situations, relationships, or conditions that activate this pattern...

What step work does this pattern point to?

Connect the pattern to specific step work...

Pattern 3:

Name the pattern:

What is the recurring pattern — in one or two sentences?

Where and when does it most reliably appear?

Specific situations, relationships, or conditions that activate this pattern...

What step work does this pattern point to?

Connect the pattern to specific step work...

Monitoring Spiritual Drift

Spiritual drift is the gradual, often invisible return toward self-directed living — the slow loss of conscious contact, the reemergence of control or using patterns, the quiet erosion of the serenity that the program has been building.

1. Looking back across the past month: where do you notice spiritual drift — a gradual return toward old patterns, away from conscious contact or program practices?

Monitor your drift honestly...

2. What are the early warning signs of drift in your specific recovery — the subtle changes in thinking, behavior, or spiritual practice that precede more serious erosion?

Monitor your drift honestly...

3. What is your re-entry practice — how do you return to the maintenance steps after a period of drift, without shame and without pretending the drift did not happen?

Monitor your drift honestly...

PART 3 OF 6 · READING

Step Eleven: Prayer, Meditation & Conscious Contact — The Discipline That Sustains Everything

Step Eleven is the program's most explicit acknowledgment that recovery is not only a psychological process but a spiritual one — and that the spiritual relationship cultivated in the preceding steps requires ongoing practice, deepening, and care.

The word "improve" is doing significant work in this step: "sought to improve our conscious contact." Not to establish contact — that has been developing since Step Two. To improve it. The step assumes an already-existing relationship and asks you to deepen and develop it over time.

Prayer and meditation are the twin disciplines of Step Eleven, and they tend to work in complementary directions. Prayer is the act of speaking or directing attention outward toward the Higher Power — expressing need, gratitude, confusion, longing, surrender. Meditation is the practice of quieting the mind sufficiently to receive — to listen, to be still.

The specific directive — "praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out" — is a profound shift from most people's prayer practice. It relinquishes the agenda. It says: I am not bringing a list of outcomes I want. I am bringing an open hand and asking what is wanted from me.

For both SUD and codependency recovery, Step Eleven addresses a specific pattern that tends to reassert itself in the absence of daily spiritual practice: the slow drift back toward the self-directed life. In SUD recovery, this drift tends to look like overconfidence. In codependency recovery, it tends to look like the re-emergence of controlling behavior and the loss of detachment. Both forms of drift are corrected by the same practice: daily contact with a Power greater than yourself, deliberately sought, honestly maintained, and regularly renewed.

Reflection Questions

1. What does your current Step Eleven practice actually look like — what you do, when, for how long, and how regularly? Be honest rather than aspirational.

2. What is the difference in your experience between praying for what you want and praying for knowledge of what is wanted from you? Have you ever prayed the second way and meant it?

3. Where in your recovery do you most notice the drift that Step Eleven practice is designed to correct — the slide back toward self-directed thinking and the loss of conscious contact?

4. What form of meditation or contemplative practice, however simple, has felt most accessible or meaningful to you? What has made it difficult to sustain?

5. When your Step Eleven practice has been most consistent, what has been different in your recovery, your relationships, and your daily experience?

CHECK YOURSELF · CHECK-IN 2 OF 5

Step Eleven — Prayer & Meditation Practice

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

1. I have a consistent morning practice that involves some form of prayer, meditation, or conscious spiritual contact

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

2. I have experienced the difference between praying for outcomes I want and praying for knowledge of what is wanted from me — and I practice the second more than the first

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

3. My prayer and meditation practice is daily in reality, not just in intention — it actually happens most days even when I do not feel like it

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

4. I have experienced moments of genuine conscious contact — a felt sense of being in relationship with a power greater than myself

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

5. When my Step Eleven practice slips — when days go by without it — I notice specific effects on my recovery, my relationships, and my serenity

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

6. I understand that the consistent quality of my recovery depends on the consistent practice of this step — that it is the spiritual maintenance that prevents drift

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

7. I have found a form of prayer and meditation that is genuinely mine — suited to my understanding of a Higher Power and my personality

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

8. My conscious contact practice is growing deeper over time — not static, but genuinely improving in quality and consistency

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

YOUR EXERCISE

Exercise 4: My Step Eleven Practice

Prayer, Meditation & the Discipline of Conscious Contact

The Practice That Sustains Every Other Practice

Every other maintenance step practice depends, to a significant degree, on the quality of your Step Eleven practice. The daily inventory requires the honesty that spiritual contact cultivates. The spot-check requires the awareness that meditation develops.

My Current Practice — Honest Assessment

1. Describe your actual morning practice — not what you aspire to, but what actually happens most days. Time, form, duration, content.

2. Describe your actual evening practice — or acknowledge that one is absent. What happens, and what gets in the way of more?

3. What is the quality of your current conscious contact — how present, honest, and genuine is your relationship with your Higher Power on a typical day?

4. When your Step Eleven practice is most consistent, what is different in your recovery, your relationships, and your daily experience?

Building My Morning Practice

Design a morning Step Eleven practice that is genuinely yours — suited to your understanding of a Higher Power, your personality, and your actual schedule.

1. What time will I begin, and for how long?

2. What reading or centering practice will I use to settle the mind?

3. What will my morning prayer consist of — specifically? (Use the language of "praying only for knowledge of His will and the power to carry it out.")

4. What will my meditation or stillness practice look like — even if very brief?

5. What specific intention will I set for the day?

Al-Anon Prayers in Practice

The Serenity Prayer

Which line of the Serenity Prayer is most alive for you right now — and which is most challenging? Write about what "the wisdom to know the difference" actually means in your current recovery.

Write honestly about your relationship to this prayer...

The Third Step Prayer

When you pray the Third Step Prayer ("take away my difficulties..."), what specific difficulties are you offering? How genuinely surrendered does the offering feel?

Write honestly about your relationship to this prayer...

A Prayer of Your Own

Write your most honest, personal daily prayer — not a formula, but the actual conversation you most need to have with your Higher Power today.

Write honestly about your relationship to this prayer...

YOUR EXERCISE

Exercise 5: Conscious Contact

What It Feels Like — and What Makes It Possible

Contact Is Not a Feeling — It Is a Practice

Conscious contact is not the euphoric certainty that God is present. It is the consistent orientation of attention toward a power greater than yourself — maintained through practice, returned to after drift, deepened through honesty and regularity.

My Experience of Conscious Contact

1. Describe a moment when you have experienced what felt like genuine conscious contact — a sense of connection, guidance, peace, or presence that was qualitatively different from ordinary thinking. What was happening, and what did it feel like?

2. What conditions make conscious contact most available to you — physical, relational, spiritual, or circumstantial?

3. What conditions most reliably interrupt or block conscious contact — what makes the connection feel distant or inaccessible?

4. How do you maintain or return to conscious contact during a difficult day — when circumstances are actively demanding and the interior is loud?

5. What has improved in your conscious contact practice over the course of your recovery?

My Higher Power Understanding — Current and Growing

1. How has your understanding of a Higher Power changed from when you first came to the program? What has expanded, softened, or deepened?

2. What qualities does your current Higher Power understanding carry? What can you count on from this relationship?

3. Where does your Higher Power understanding feel most alive — most genuinely trusted — in your recovery? Where does it feel most thin or theoretical?

4. Write a brief statement of your current Higher Power understanding — not as a doctrine, but as a genuine, honest description of the spiritual relationship your recovery rests on.

PART 4 OF 6 · READING

Step Twelve: The Awakening, The Carrying, and the Practice — Recovery Becomes a Gift

Step Twelve contains three distinct but inseparable elements: the spiritual awakening that the preceding steps have produced, the call to carry the message to others who are still suffering, and the instruction to practice these principles in all affairs — not just in the meeting room, but in every dimension of daily life.

The spiritual awakening described in Step Twelve is rarely a single dramatic moment. For most people in recovery — both SUD and codependency — it is the gradual accumulation of changes that, looked at together from a sufficient distance, constitute a fundamentally different way of being in the world. The person who arrives in AI-Anon unable to trust, unable to release control, unable to believe that their own needs matter — and who, years later, sits with a newcomer and communicates genuine hope — has had a spiritual awakening.

Carrying the message is the first expression of that awakening in action. The sponsor who sits with a new member and shares their own story without embellishment is carrying the message. The person who stays after a meeting to check on someone who is struggling is carrying the message.

For those in codependency recovery, the Twelfth Step has a particular complexity: the challenge is to carry the message without carrying the person — to be present and helpful without taking over, to offer their experience without managing the outcome. The codependency-recovery version of Twelfth Step service work is the most direct expression of everything AI-Anon has been teaching: care that respects the other person's agency, help that does not eliminate the need for them to do their own work.

"Practice these principles in all our affairs" is the phrase that makes every other step relevant beyond the meeting room. The principles of the program — honesty, humility, surrender, inventory, amends, prayer, service — are not recovery-specific tools to be deployed only when the disease is immediately present. They are principles for living.

Reflection Questions

1. What evidence of a spiritual awakening do you see in yourself — not a dramatic event, but the accumulated changes that constitute a fundamentally different way of living?

2. Where in your life are you currently carrying the message — through formal service work, informal helping, or the quality of how you live and relate?

3. For codependency recovery: how do you carry the message without carrying the person? Where do your service instincts risk drifting back into the familiar patterns of rescuing and over-responsibility?

4. What does "practice these principles in all your affairs" look like outside the meeting room — in your workplace, your parenting, your friendships, your relationship with yourself?

5. What would the person who brought you to AI-Anon — the version of you at your most desperate, most exhausted, most controlled or controlling — say if they could see who you are today?

CHECK YOURSELF · CHECK-IN 3 OF 5

Step Twelve — Spiritual Awakening Evidence

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

1. I can identify specific changes in who I am — not just in what I do — that constitute the spiritual awakening the step describes

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

2. I experience my recovery as something qualitatively different from simply not using or not controlling — a genuinely different way of being in the world

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

3. I have a growing capacity for genuine relationships — connections marked by honesty, trust, and mutual care rather than performance or management

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

4. I experience serenity as something accessible rather than theoretical — something I can return to even in difficult circumstances

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

5. My fundamental orientation toward life has shifted: from fear and control toward trust and acceptance; from self-direction toward surrender; from isolation toward connection

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

6. I can name specific people, relationships, or areas of my life where the awakening is visibly and concretely expressed

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

7. The spiritual awakening feels like something that is continuing — deepening over time — rather than a fixed achievement that is complete

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

8. I have moments of genuine gratitude for the path that brought me to recovery — including the pain that made recovery necessary

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

CHECK YOURSELF · CHECK-IN 4 OF 5

Step Twelve — Carrying the Message & Service

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

1. I am currently engaged in some form of Step Twelve service work — sponsoring, sharing in meetings, committee service, or informal helping

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

2. I can carry the message without carrying the person — offering my experience without taking over or managing the outcome

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

3. My service work is motivated primarily by genuine care for the people I serve rather than by the need to be needed, validated, or identified as helpful

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

4. I share my actual experience — including difficulty, failure, and nonlinearity — rather than a polished narrative that might be inspiring but is not fully honest

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

5. I understand that the service I give is as important to my own recovery as it is to those I serve — that giving away what I have helps me keep it

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

6. I notice the codependency risk in service work — the drift toward rescuing, advice-giving, or over-involvement — and I monitor it in my service relationships

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

7. My service work is supervised or mentored — I have a sponsor or program elder who can help me recognize when service has drifted into codependency

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

8. I practice these principles not only in formal service but in the ordinary encounters of daily life — at work, in family, in community

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

YOUR EXERCISE

Exercise 6: Evidence of My Spiritual Awakening

What the Steps Have Actually Produced in Me

The Evidence Already Exists

The spiritual awakening Step Twelve describes is already underway. It arrived not in a single moment but in the accumulated changes across months or years of program work. This exercise gathers the evidence — the specific, concrete, named changes in who you are and how you live.

Relationship with Myself

How do you treat yourself differently? What self-respect, self-honesty, or self-care did not exist before?

Before the program / early recovery: what was this domain like?

Now: what specific evidence of awakening or change exists in this domain?

Relationships with Others

How do you relate differently — more honestly, more present, less controlled or controlling, more genuinely caring?

Before the program / early recovery: what was this domain like?

Now: what specific evidence of awakening or change exists in this domain?

Relationship with Fear

Where has fear lost its previous grip — where do you act despite it, or where does it no longer arise in situations that previously triggered it?

Before the program / early recovery: what was this domain like?

Now: what specific evidence of awakening or change exists in this domain?

Relationship with a Higher Power

How is your spiritual life different — not just intellectually, but in practice, felt experience, and daily orientation?

Before the program / early recovery: what was this domain like?

Now: what specific evidence of awakening or change exists in this domain?

Recovery and the Program

How do you experience the program differently — from obligation or desperation to genuine home, resource, and community?

Before the program / early recovery: what was this domain like?

Now: what specific evidence of awakening or change exists in this domain?

Sense of Purpose and Meaning

Where has meaning returned, or arrived for the first time — a sense that your life is going somewhere worth going?

Before the program / early recovery: what was this domain like?

Now: what specific evidence of awakening or change exists in this domain?

A Letter to My Former Self

Write a letter to the version of yourself who first arrived at AI-Anon — the person who was not yet sure any of this was real or possible. Tell them what you have found. Tell them what the awakening has actually looked like.

Dear [your name] — the one who arrived at that first meeting..., // Here is what I want you to know...

YOUR EXERCISE

Exercise 7: My Step Twelve Service

Carrying Without Carrying — Service That Serves

The Gift That Keeps the Giver

Step Twelve service is not something you do for others at your own expense. It is one of the primary mechanisms by which your own recovery is sustained — the act of giving away what you have is how you keep it.

My Current Service Life

1. What Step Twelve service work are you currently engaged in? Be specific — formal roles, sponsoring, sharing, informal helping, committee work.

2. What motivates your service — genuine care, the need to feel needed, obligation, or some mixture? Be honest about the proportions.

3. Where do you find service most meaningful — the type of work or the specific population you serve that most deeply connects to your own recovery story?

4. Where is service currently absent from your recovery life — and what would beginning to offer it require?

Carrying Without Carrying — The Codependency Risk in Service

When Service Becomes Codependency

The person in codependency recovery faces a specific risk in Step Twelve service: the caretaking, rescuing, and over-involvement patterns that the program has been treating can find new expression in program service work.

1. Where in your service work do you notice caretaking, advice-giving, or over-involvement — taking on what belongs to the person you are serving?

Examine your service practice for codependency patterns...

2. What is the difference, in your practice, between sharing your experience and prescribing a solution? How do you stay on the right side of that line?

Examine your service practice for codependency patterns...

3. How do you manage the emotional investment in the outcomes of your service work — when a sponsee relapses, when the newcomer disappears, when your service doesn't "work"?

Examine your service practice for codependency patterns...

My Message to Carry

What is the specific message you carry — the particular aspect of your recovery story that is most useful to someone in your situation? Write it out in the form you would actually share it: honest, specific, unembellished, and genuinely hopeful.

When I first came to this program I was... What I have found is... What I want you to know is that...

YOUR EXERCISE

Exercise 8: Principles in All My Affairs

Taking the Program Into Every Room of Your Life

The Entire Life

'In all our affairs' is the most comprehensive instruction in all twelve steps. It means the program's principles apply not just when you are in the meeting room, not just in the relationship with the alcoholic, not just in crisis — but in every domain of daily life.

Work & Professional Life

Core principle in this domain: Honesty, integrity, accountability, and promptly admitting error

Where are the program's principles most visibly practiced in this domain of your life?

Where are the principles least applied — where does this domain still operate by the old rules?

One specific thing you could do this week to bring the program's principles more fully into this domain:

Parenting

Core principle in this domain: Detachment with love, appropriate limits, the long-view amend, modeling rather than controlling

Where are the program's principles most visibly practiced in this domain of your life?

Where are the principles least applied — where does this domain still operate by the old rules?

One specific thing you could do this week to bring the program's principles more fully into this domain:

Friendship

Core principle in this domain: Honest connection, healthy limits, genuine availability without caretaking

Where are the program's principles most visibly practiced in this domain of your life?

Where are the principles least applied — where does this domain still operate by the old rules?

One specific thing you could do this week to bring the program's principles more fully into this domain:

Intimate Partnership

Core principle in this domain: Vulnerability, honesty, healthy interdependence, the ongoing living amend

Where are the program's principles most visibly practiced in this domain of your life?

Where are the principles least applied — where does this domain still operate by the old rules?

One specific thing you could do this week to bring the program's principles more fully into this domain:

Community & Citizenship

Core principle in this domain: Service, fairness, the willingness to be present to needs beyond your immediate circle

Where are the program's principles most visibly practiced in this domain of your life?

Where are the principles least applied — where does this domain still operate by the old rules?

One specific thing you could do this week to bring the program's principles more fully into this domain:

Self-Care & Personal Health

Core principle in this domain: The ongoing self-amend: treating yourself as a person worthy of care and attention

Where are the program's principles most visibly practiced in this domain of your life?

Where are the principles least applied — where does this domain still operate by the old rules?

One specific thing you could do this week to bring the program's principles more fully into this domain:

PART 5 OF 6 · READING

Steps Ten, Eleven & Twelve — Dual Lens: What the Maintenance Steps Look Like in Each Recovery

The maintenance steps look different in SUD recovery and codependency recovery in specific ways worth examining directly.

In SUD recovery, Step Ten's daily inventory focuses primarily on the patterns most likely to precede relapse: resentment, dishonesty, self-centeredness, fear, and isolation. The daily inventory in SUD recovery is explicitly relapse prevention — the early detection system that catches the emotional and relational conditions that historically preceded using.

In codependency recovery, Step Ten's daily inventory focuses on the patterns most likely to erode the serenity that Al-Anon has been building: controlling behavior, enabling, self-abandonment, and the loss of detachment. The person in codependency recovery asks daily: did I try to manage or control something that was not mine to manage? Did I suppress my own truth to manage someone else's emotional state? Did I take on a problem that belongs to someone else?

In Step Eleven, the prayer content of SUD recovery often centers on surrender of the specific conditions most triggering to the disease. The conscious contact sought is with a Higher Power who can provide what the substance once provided — relief, peace, comfort, belonging. The prayer content of codependency recovery often centers on the ability to release what is not yours, the trust that others are capable of managing their own lives, the willingness to attend to your own life as the primary spiritual discipline.

In Step Twelve, the person in SUD recovery carries the specific hope of sobriety — the living demonstration that the disease does not have to win. The person in codependency recovery carries a different but equally essential hope: that it is possible to love someone deeply and still maintain your own self, that detachment with love is not the same as abandonment, that the program can produce genuine serenity even when the alcoholic is still drinking.

Reflection Questions

1. Looking at the dual-lens descriptions of Step Ten: which set of inventory questions is most central to your specific recovery — SUD or codependency — and are you consistently asking them?

2. How does the content of your Step Eleven prayer reflect your specific recovery? What are you most often asking for, and what does that reveal about where your recovery is most active?

3. What message do you carry that is specific to your recovery path — what can you offer to someone in your situation that a person with a different story could not?

4. Where do you notice the two recovery paths intersecting for you — where SUD and codependency dynamics are both present and both require daily attention?

5. The dual-lens approach suggests that both SUD and codependency recovery require ongoing daily maintenance work — but the specific practices differ. How would you describe your own daily practice in the language of your specific recovery?

PART 6 OF 6 · READING

Integration: The Twelve Steps as a Complete System for Living

Having moved through all twelve steps — even if imperfectly, even if partially, even if with significant backtracking and repetition — it becomes possible to see the steps not as individual items on a checklist but as an integrated system for living.

Step One establishes the foundation — the honest admission of what you cannot manage on your own. Step Two opens the door — the willingness to believe that help is available. Step Three is the decision to walk through that door. Steps Four through Nine do the clearing work. And Steps Ten, Eleven, and Twelve carry all of that forward — into the present, into the spiritual relationship that sustains it, and outward into service that gives the work its fullest meaning.

The integration of the twelve steps is experienced most clearly in long-term recovery, when people are able to look back across years and see how each element has contributed to a life that would have been unrecognizable from the starting point. The person who arrived in Al-Anon unable to attend to their own life because they were so consumed with the alcoholic's — and who now lives with genuine serenity, genuine relationships, genuine purpose — has experienced that integration.

The steps are not a destination. They are the path — a way of walking through the world that becomes more familiar, more natural, and more deeply satisfying the longer it is practiced.

The invitation of this intensive is not to achieve a perfect recovery. It is to continue: to keep working the steps with honesty, to keep bringing your actual self rather than the self you wish you were, to keep accepting the help that the program offers, and to trust that the accumulated practice of showing up honestly, day after day, produces exactly the life that the program promises.

Reflection Questions

1. Looking at all twelve steps together: which feels most alive and practiced in your current recovery? Which feels most underdeveloped or consistently bypassed?

2. What does "the twelve steps as a system for living" mean to you — not just as a crisis response, but as an ongoing daily practice for all twelve?

3. What has your journey through the steps revealed about yourself that you could not have seen before you began? What has changed most fundamentally?

4. Where in the integration do you experience the most genuine freedom — the most vivid sense that recovery is producing a life qualitatively different from what preceded it?

5. What would you say to the version of yourself who first arrived at this program — the person who was not yet sure that any of this was real or possible?

CHECK YOURSELF · CHECK-IN 5 OF 5

Integration — The Twelve Steps as Daily Living

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

1. I experience the twelve steps not as a program I completed but as a way of living I practice — an ongoing orientation rather than a past accomplishment

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

2. All twelve steps feel alive and relevant to my current life — not just the early steps that addressed the crisis, but the maintenance steps that sustain the recovery

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

3. My recovery has expanded beyond the immediate crisis that brought me to the program — it has changed how I live with everyone in my life, not only the alcoholic

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

4. I can identify which step is most active or most needed in my current season of recovery — and I am working it deliberately

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

5. I have a sponsor or program relationship that keeps me honest about the quality of my step practice — someone who sees me clearly and tells me the truth

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

6. I understand that working the steps is a lifelong practice that continues to yield new insight and new growth the longer it is sustained

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

7. My recovery is visible to others — the people who know me can see that something fundamental has changed, not only in my behavior but in my character

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

8. I believe that the life the program promises — serenity, honest relationships, genuine freedom, and purposeful service — is available to me and is increasingly my actual experience

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

YOUR EXERCISE

Exercise 10: My Steps 10, 11 & 12 Commitment

The Recovered Life — Practiced, Not Achieved

The Completion That Is Also a Beginning

Completing this intensive is not completing the twelve steps. The twelve steps are not completed — they are lived. The commitment you write here is not a graduation declaration. It is a re-enrollment — the choice to keep doing the work that recovery requires.

What This Intensive Revealed

1. From the reading: what single insight about Steps Ten, Eleven, or Twelve most significantly changed or clarified your understanding?

2. From the assessment: which domain had the lowest score, and what does working to improve it actually require?

3. From the worksheets: which exercise was most challenging or most revealing? What did it show you?

4. What do you know now about the maintenance steps — as a daily practice, not a concept — that you did not know before this work?

My Daily Maintenance Practice Commitment

1. Step Ten — my daily inventory: What specifically will I do, when, and how? Name the questions, the time, the format, and the accountability.

Name the specific practice — time, format, frequency, accountability...

2. Step Eleven — my conscious contact practice: What specifically will my morning practice include? What is the minimum viable practice I will do even on difficult days?

Name the specific practice — time, format, frequency, accountability...

3. Step Twelve — my service commitment: What am I currently doing or committing to begin? What is my next concrete service action?

Name the specific practice — time, format, frequency, accountability...

Completing the Series — Looking Back Across All Twelve Steps

1. You have now worked through the entire AI-Anon twelve-step series. Which step has been most transformative? Which remains most incomplete?

2. Which step do you expect to return to most frequently — the one that the ongoing work of recovery will most regularly require?

3. What is the most important thing the twelve steps have given you that you did not have before recovery?

4. What would you say to the version of yourself who stood at the beginning of this work, unsure whether any of it was worth doing?

My Steps 10, 11 & 12 Declaration

Write your personal declaration — the commitment that carries you forward into the recovered life.

I am committed to the daily practice of Steps Ten, Eleven, and Twelve as the ongoing architecture of my recovered life. / / I will take daily inventory by... / I will maintain conscious contact through... / I will carry the message by... / I will practice these principles in all my affairs by... / / The recovered life I am claiming is...

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

The twelve steps do not conclude — they continue. The maintenance steps are not the end of the work but the form the work takes from here forward: the daily inventory that keeps you current with yourself, the conscious contact that keeps you connected to something larger, and the service that carries everything the program has given you outward into the world.