

NA Step Two Deep Dive

NA Deep Dive · The Recovery Files

"We Came to Believe That a Power Greater Than Ourselves Could Restore Us to Sanity"

Narcotics Anonymous — Step 2

Insanity · Same patterns, no hope · Restoration · New belief, new possibility

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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 5 · READING

Understanding Step Two: "We Came to Believe That a Power Greater Than Ourselves Could Restore Us to Sanity"

Step Two is the bridge between the despair of Step One and the decision of Step Three. If Step One is the diagnosis — "I am powerless and my life is unmanageable" — then Step Two is the prognosis: "There is something that can help, and it is not me." Step Two introduces hope into a process that, up to this point, has asked only for honesty about devastating realities.

"We came to believe" describes a process, not an event. It does not say "We believed" — a past-tense declaration of established faith. It says "We came to believe" — an ongoing journey toward belief that may begin with nothing more than a faint willingness to consider the possibility. This language is intentionally gentle. It does not demand instant faith. It invites gradual opening.

"A Power greater than ourselves" is the most discussed and most resisted phrase in all of twelve-step recovery. For some, this means God as understood through a specific religious tradition. For others, it means the collective wisdom of the recovery fellowship, the forces of nature, the energy of the universe, or simply the observable reality that something larger than individual willpower has kept millions of addicts clean. Narcotics Anonymous is explicitly clear: this is not about any particular religion's God. It is about your willingness to acknowledge that your own resources have proven insufficient and that something beyond your individual power must be accessed for recovery to work.

"Could restore us" introduces the concept of possibility, not certainty. Step Two does not say "will restore us" — it says "could." This matters enormously for the newcomer who is full of doubt. You don't have to believe it will happen. You only need to acknowledge that it could. That tiny crack of possibility is enough to begin.

"To sanity" is perhaps the most provocative phrase in the step, because it implies that what came before — what you were living in active addiction — was insanity. This is not a clinical diagnosis. It is a description of a pattern: doing the same thing over and over again while expecting different results. The insanity of addiction extends far beyond substance use — it infiltrates thinking, feeling, relating, and making meaning of the world.

Step Two is fundamentally a step of hope. After the sometimes brutal honesty of Step One — where you laid bare the full scope of your powerlessness and the wreckage of your unmanageability — Step Two offers the first glimpse of dawn. Not a guarantee. Not a solution you can grasp and control. But a possibility that didn't exist before you admitted the problem.

Reflection Questions

1. How do the words "came to believe" — describing a process rather than an event — affect your approach to Step Two? Does it relieve pressure or create frustration?

2. What is your honest reaction to the phrase "a Power greater than ourselves"? What resistance arises? What curiosity?

3. The step says "could restore" — not "will restore." How does the language of possibility rather than certainty affect your ability to engage with this step?

4. In what ways was your life during active addiction characterized by insanity — doing the same things and expecting different results? Give specific examples.

5. If Step Two is fundamentally a step of hope, where does your hope stand today? On a scale of 1 to 10, how much do you believe that something can genuinely help?

YOUR EXERCISE

Word-by-Word Step Two Deconstruction

Every Word Carries Weight — Explore Each One

Why This Matters

Step Two is often recited without being truly examined. Each phrase was crafted with intention — to make room for the widest possible range of experience while maintaining the essential truth: you need something beyond yourself, and that something can help.

WE

Coming to believe is not a solo project. It happens in community — through the shared testimony of others, the witnessed recovery of those who went before you.

What does this phrase mean to you personally — right now, in your current state of recovery?

Where do you feel resistance or struggle with this phrase?

How does your life experience relate to this phrase?

CAME TO BELIEVE

"Came to believe" describes a process — a journey, not a destination. An unfolding, a gradual opening, a willingness to move toward something you don't yet fully grasp.

What does this phrase mean to you personally — right now, in your current state of recovery?

Where do you feel resistance or struggle with this phrase?

How does your life experience relate to this phrase?

A POWER

The step says "a" Power — indefinite, open, not "the" Power. This preserves your freedom to discover what this Power means to you.

What does this phrase mean to you personally — right now, in your current state of recovery?

Where do you feel resistance or struggle with this phrase?

How does your life experience relate to this phrase?

GREATER THAN OURSELVES

"Greater than ourselves" is the only requirement — that this Power exceeds your individual capacity. Your best thinking got you here. Your self-will proved insufficient.

What does this phrase mean to you personally — right now, in your current state of recovery?

Where do you feel resistance or struggle with this phrase?

How does your life experience relate to this phrase?

COULD RESTORE US

"Could" — not "will" or "must." The language of possibility, not guarantee. And "restore" — not "create" or "build." Sanity is your natural state. Addiction interrupted it.

What does this phrase mean to you personally — right now, in your current state of recovery?

Where do you feel resistance or struggle with this phrase?

How does your life experience relate to this phrase?

TO SANITY

"To sanity" implies that what preceded it was insanity — an honest description of the patterns and behavior that characterized active addiction.

What does this phrase mean to you personally — right now, in your current state of recovery?

Where do you feel resistance or struggle with this phrase?

How does your life experience relate to this phrase?

Step Two Synthesis

1. Rewrite Step Two in your own words — a personal version that captures what each phrase means specifically for YOU.

2. Which phrase was hardest to engage with? What does that difficulty reveal?

3. Which phrase brought the most comfort or hope? What is it about that phrase that resonates?

4. Read your personal version aloud. What happens inside you when you hear yourself say these words?

PART 2 OF 5 · READING

The Insanity of Addiction: What Needs Restoring

Before you can be restored to sanity, you must understand what the insanity looks like. This is not about labeling yourself as "crazy" — it is about honestly recognizing the patterns of thought, behavior, and decision-making that characterized active addiction and that, if left unaddressed, will lead you back to using. The insanity of addiction is subtle, pervasive, and often invisible from the inside. Naming it is the first step toward its transformation.

The most obvious form of insanity is the repetitive cycle of using despite consequences. You used and suffered. You suffered and used again. You promised to stop. You used. Each time, part of your mind believed — genuinely, sincerely believed — that this time would be different. An outside observer watching this pattern would call it insane. But from inside the disease, it felt logical, even inevitable.

But the insanity extends far beyond the using itself. Consider the insanity of your decision-making: choosing short-term relief over long-term wellbeing, every single time. The insanity of your self-deception: maintaining elaborate systems of lies, to yourself and others, about the severity and consequences of your addiction. The insanity of your emotional responses: raging at the people trying to help you while protecting the substance that was destroying you. The insanity of your priorities: spending resources — money, time, energy, love — on a substance that gave nothing back while neglecting everything that mattered.

There is also the insanity of isolation — withdrawing from the very connections that might have helped. There is the insanity of denial — looking directly at evidence of devastation and concluding, somehow, that the problem wasn't that serious. There is the insanity of grandiosity — believing that you, unlike the millions who failed before you, could control addiction through intelligence, willpower, or sheer determination.

Perhaps most insidious is the insanity of "normal thinking" in recovery. Even after substances are removed, the insane patterns of thought continue. The mind that was trained by years of addiction doesn't simply reset when you stop using. It continues to produce distorted thinking: black-and-white conclusions, catastrophizing, personalization, emotional reasoning, and the persistent belief that you can manage this on your own.

This is why Step Two doesn't say "we restored ourselves to sanity" — it says we came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could do the restoring. The very mind that needs repair is not equipped to repair itself unassisted.

Recognizing the insanity is not meant to induce shame. It is meant to create clarity. Insanity in this context is not a permanent condition — it is a symptom of a treatable disease. And the restoration begins the moment you acknowledge that the insanity existed and that something beyond your individual mind is needed to address it.

Reflection Questions

1. List five specific examples of insanity from your active addiction — times when you did the same thing expecting different results, or made decisions that were clearly irrational in hindsight.

2. How did the insanity extend beyond your substance use into your thinking, emotions, relationships, and decision-making? Where else was "sanity" absent?

3. Are there patterns of insane thinking that persist even in recovery — distortions, denial patterns, or irrational beliefs that haven't fully resolved? What do they look like?

4. Does the word "insanity" feel accurate when you apply it to your addiction? Is there resistance to that word? What does the resistance protect?

5. If the mind that needs restoring cannot restore itself, what does that imply about the necessity of a Power greater than yourself?

CHECK YOURSELF · CHECK-IN 1 OF 5

Insanity Recognition

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

1. I can identify specific patterns in my addiction where I repeated the same behaviors expecting different results

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

2. I recognize that my thinking during active addiction was distorted, irrational, and disconnected from reality

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

3. I understand that "restored to sanity" implies my addiction involved a form of insanity

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

4. I can see how my decision-making was impaired far beyond just choosing to use substances

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

5. I acknowledge that my "best thinking" during active addiction consistently led me to worse outcomes

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

6. I can identify ways my insanity extended beyond substance use into relationships, emotions, and daily life

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

7. I accept that I was unable to see the insanity while I was in it — and may still have blind spots

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

8. I understand that the insanity of addiction is a symptom of the disease, not evidence of personal defectiveness

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

YOUR EXERCISE

Personal Insanity Inventory

Honestly Naming What Needs Restoring

Purpose

Before you can be 'restored to sanity,' you must clearly identify the insanity. This inventory names the specific patterns that characterized your addiction. Naming them honestly creates the foundation for understanding exactly what Step Two is promising to address.

Repetitive Insanity

Doing the same thing and expecting different results. Using despite consequences, trying the same failed strategies repeatedly.

Give three specific examples of this type of insanity from your own addiction:

Could you see this insanity while you were in it, or did it only become visible later?

Is any version of this insanity still active in your life today? How might it be operating more subtly?

Thinking Insanity

Distorted thought patterns: black-and-white thinking, catastrophizing, minimizing, rationalizing.

Give three specific examples of this type of insanity from your own addiction:

Could you see this insanity while you were in it, or did it only become visible later?

Is any version of this insanity still active in your life today? How might it be operating more subtly?

Emotional Insanity

Explosive anger, paralyzing fear, suicidal despair, complete numbness — emotions wildly out of proportion to reality.

Give three specific examples of this type of insanity from your own addiction:

Could you see this insanity while you were in it, or did it only become visible later?

Is any version of this insanity still active in your life today? How might it be operating more subtly?

Relational Insanity

Pushing away those who helped, clinging to those who harmed, sabotaging good relationships, isolating while craving connection.

Give three specific examples of this type of insanity from your own addiction:

Could you see this insanity while you were in it, or did it only become visible later?

Is any version of this insanity still active in your life today? How might it be operating more subtly?

Priority Insanity

Choosing substance over children, career, health, freedom, love. Spending precious resources on destruction while neglecting what mattered.

Give three specific examples of this type of insanity from your own addiction:

Could you see this insanity while you were in it, or did it only become visible later?

Is any version of this insanity still active in your life today? How might it be operating more subtly?

Self-Deception Insanity

The elaborate system of lies, to yourself and others, that maintained the fiction that everything was fine.

Give three specific examples of this type of insanity from your own addiction:

Could you see this insanity while you were in it, or did it only become visible later?

Is any version of this insanity still active in your life today? How might it be operating more subtly?

Insanity Inventory Summary

1. Looking at the full scope of your insanity inventory, what pattern emerges? What was the common thread?

Synthesize your inventory...

2. Which form of insanity is most resistant to change — the one that persists most stubbornly even in recovery?

Synthesize your inventory...

3. Now that you've named the insanity, what does "restoration to sanity" actually mean for YOUR life?

Synthesize your inventory...

PART 3 OF 5 · READING

Coming to Believe: The Journey from Despair to Faith

"Coming to believe" is one of the most carefully worded phrases in the Twelve Steps. It describes a process — a journey with a beginning, a middle, and an ongoing unfolding. It does not demand that you arrive at belief instantly, fully, or on anyone else's terms. It only asks that you begin to move in the direction of believing. For many people in early recovery, this is the most they can do, and it is enough.

The journey of coming to believe often begins with desperation rather than faith. You didn't arrive at Step Two through philosophical reflection — you arrived because Step One showed you that your own resources were exhausted. The willingness to consider a Power greater than yourself often begins not with attraction to spirituality but with the honest recognition that self-reliance has failed catastrophically.

The next phase is often observation. Before you can believe that a Power greater than yourself can help you, it helps to see evidence that it has helped others. When you sit in a room and hear someone who was as hopeless as you describe a life that has been transformed — not through willpower or self-improvement, but through a process that involves spiritual principles and a Higher Power — you are receiving empirical evidence for Step Two. You don't have to understand how it works. You only need to observe that it does.

From observation, many people move to experimentation. You try praying — not because you believe it will work, but because you're desperate enough to try anything. You start a meditation practice — not because you feel connected to the universe, but because someone you trust suggested it. And something shifts. Not dramatically, not instantly, but perceptibly. The obsession lifts for a moment. A relationship begins to heal. You experience a moment of peace that your mind alone could not have manufactured.

Narcotics Anonymous makes room for all types of doubters. The program does not require belief in God, church attendance, or adherence to any theological framework. It requires only willingness — willingness to consider that something beyond your individual resources exists and can help. Your Higher Power can be the group, the principles of the program, the universe, love, the collective recovery of millions, or the still small voice within that your addiction tried to silence.

Coming to believe is not a destination you reach once and never revisit. It is a relationship that deepens over time, weathers crises, and evolves as you grow. Faith that never questions is brittle; faith that engages honestly with doubt becomes resilient.

Reflection Questions

1. Where are you in the journey of coming to believe? Are you in the desperation phase, the observation phase, the experimentation phase, or somewhere else?

2. What obstacles stand between you and belief in a Power greater than yourself? Are they intellectual, emotional, experiential, or some combination?

3. Have you observed evidence in the recovery of others that something beyond individual willpower is at work? What have you seen?

4. Have you experimented with spiritual practices — prayer, meditation, asking for help — even without certainty? What happened when you did?

5. If your Higher Power could be anything greater than your self-reliance, what feels most authentic to you at this point in your journey?

CHECK YOURSELF · CHECK-IN 2 OF 5

Capacity for Hope

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

1. I believe that recovery is genuinely possible for me — not just in theory, but as a lived reality

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

2. I have seen evidence that people with stories like mine have recovered and are living meaningful lives

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

3. I am willing to consider that something better is possible, even when I can't yet see what it looks like

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

4. I can hold hope even during difficult moments, setbacks, or painful emotions

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

5. I have moved beyond hopelessness into at least a tentative willingness to believe in possibility

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

6. I draw hope from the recovery of others even when I struggle to generate it internally

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

7. I believe that my life can be fundamentally different — not just substance-free, but genuinely fulfilling

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

8. I am beginning to trust that the pain of recovery is leading somewhere worthwhile

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

YOUR EXERCISE

Seeds of Hope — Evidence Gathering

Collecting the Evidence That Recovery Is Real

Why This Matters

Hope is not wishful thinking — it is evidence-based confidence that something better is possible. This exercise collects specific, concrete evidence from your own experience and the experiences of others that recovery works.

Hope from the Recovery of Others

1. Name a specific person in recovery whose story gave you hope. What about their story resonated?

2. What have you heard in meetings that cracked your hopelessness — even for a moment?

3. Who in your life is evidence that recovery works?

Hope from Your Own Experience

1. What moments in your own recovery have surprised you — times when things worked out in ways you didn't expect?

2. Has the obsession to use ever lifted, even temporarily? What was that experience like?

3. What is one thing that is better in your life today than it was during active addiction?

Seeds of Future Hope

1. If recovery continues to work, what might your life look like in one year? In five years?

2. What dreams or possibilities has recovery made thinkable that were unthinkable during active addiction?

3. Write a statement of hope — not certainty, just hope. "I am beginning to believe that..."

YOUR EXERCISE

Obstacles to Belief Excavation

Understanding What Stands Between You and Step Two

Honoring the Obstacles

Your resistance to belief didn't come from nowhere. It came from real experiences, real wounds, and real ways the world hurt you. This exercise names them honestly so they can be understood and, eventually, worked through.

Wounds from Religion

Past negative experiences with organized religion — judgment, hypocrisy, abuse, rejection — that make spiritual concepts feel dangerous.

What specific experiences with religion or religious people have wounded you? How do those wounds affect your ability to engage with Step Two?

Is this obstacle a permanent wall or a doorway that needs a different key? What would begin to address it?

Intellectual Resistance

A commitment to rational, empirical thinking that makes "Higher Power" feel like intellectual dishonesty or magical thinking.

How does your intellectual framework resist the concept of a Higher Power? What would "a Power greater than yourself" need to look like for your intellect to accept it?

Is this obstacle a permanent wall or a doorway that needs a different key? What would begin to address it?

Trust Destroyed by Experience

Life experiences — abuse, abandonment, trauma, loss — that have made trusting anything or anyone feel impossible.

What experiences have made trust feel dangerous? How has being hurt made you resistant to relying on anything beyond your own self-protection?

Is this obstacle a permanent wall or a doorway that needs a different key? What would begin to address it?

Anger at God/Life/Universe

Rage at a Higher Power who "allowed" suffering, or at a universe that seems indifferent to pain.

Are you angry at God, the universe, or life itself? What happened that created this anger? What would you say to a Higher Power if one were listening?

Is this obstacle a permanent wall or a doorway that needs a different key? What would begin to address it?

Feeling Undeserving of Help

The belief that you are too damaged, too guilty, too far gone for any Power to care about or restore.

Do you believe you deserve to be restored? If not, where does that belief come from? What would it mean if recovery were available regardless of what you've done?

Is this obstacle a permanent wall or a doorway that needs a different key? What would begin to address it?

YOUR EXERCISE

Voice of Doubt vs. Voice of Possibility

Learning to Recognize Who Is Speaking

Two Voices

Your mind contains a Voice of Doubt that argues against belief and a Voice of Possibility that invites openness. Learning to recognize when doubt is protecting your disease versus when possibility is opening a door is critical to Step Two.

You're asked to pray or meditate and it feels ridiculous or pointless

VOICE OF DOUBT SAYS:

VOICE OF POSSIBILITY RESPONDS:

You see someone relapse who had years of recovery and strong spiritual practice

VOICE OF DOUBT SAYS:

VOICE OF POSSIBILITY RESPONDS:

You experience a painful loss and wonder where your Higher Power was

VOICE OF DOUBT SAYS:

VOICE OF POSSIBILITY RESPONDS:

Someone shares a powerful spiritual experience and you feel nothing

VOICE OF DOUBT SAYS:

VOICE OF POSSIBILITY RESPONDS:

You're struggling and the program's promises feel empty

VOICE OF DOUBT SAYS:

VOICE OF POSSIBILITY RESPONDS:

You feel like the only person in the room who doesn't "get" the God thing

VOICE OF DOUBT SAYS:

VOICE OF POSSIBILITY RESPONDS:

PART 4 OF 5 · READING

A Power Greater Than Ourselves: Building Your Own Understanding

The concept of a Higher Power is the most personal element of recovery, and no one can define it for you. This is simultaneously the most liberating and most challenging aspect of Step Two. Liberating because it means you are free to develop an understanding that genuinely resonates with your experience, your values, and your honest sense of how the world works. Challenging because it means you cannot simply borrow someone else's faith and call it your own.

Let us begin with what a Higher Power is not, in the context of Narcotics Anonymous. It is not necessarily the God of any particular religion, though it can be if that resonates with you. It is not a cosmic vending machine that grants wishes if you insert the right prayer. It is not a punitive judge keeping score of your failures. It is not a concept you must fully understand before you can begin to work with it. And it is not static — your understanding of your Higher Power is expected to grow, change, and deepen as your recovery progresses.

What, then, is a Higher Power? At its most fundamental, it is any source of power, wisdom, or influence that exceeds your individual capacity. For many people in NA, the group itself serves as an initial Higher Power — the collective experience and wisdom of people who have been where you are and found a way through.

For others, a Higher Power takes the form of spiritual principles — honesty, open-mindedness, willingness, love, compassion, courage, integrity. These principles, when practiced consistently, produce results that individual willpower cannot. When you practice honesty after years of deception, doors open that were sealed shut. When you extend compassion after years of self-centeredness, relationships heal in ways you cannot engineer.

Some people find their Higher Power in nature — the ocean, the mountains, the stars, the rhythms of seasons that continue regardless of human chaos. Some find it in love — the force that connects parent to child, friend to friend, sponsor to newcomer. Some find it in the recovered lives of others. And yes, some find their Higher Power in God — understood through the lens of a specific faith tradition or a personal spiritual practice.

NA makes no judgment about which understanding is correct. It only insists that the Power be greater than your individual self-will, because self-will has demonstrably failed to solve your problem. The only fatal error in Step Two is the refusal to seek a Power greater than yourself. The specific nature of that Power is between you and your own honest inquiry.

Reflection Questions

1. What is your current, honest understanding of a Higher Power? Don't write what you think you should believe — write what you actually believe, even if it's uncertain or evolving.

2. Have you been trying to borrow someone else's concept of a Higher Power rather than developing your own? What would an authentic Higher Power look like for you?

3. What past experiences with religion, God, or spirituality have wounded you? How do those wounds affect your ability to engage with Step Two?

4. Can you identify moments in your recovery where something beyond your own effort seemed to be at work? What happened?

5. If your Higher Power is allowed to be undefined, evolving, and uncertain — if it only needs to be greater than your self-will — does that make Step Two more accessible?

CHECK YOURSELF · CHECK-IN 3 OF 5

Spiritual Open-Mindedness

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

1. I am willing to consider that a Power greater than myself exists, even if I don't understand what that means yet

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

2. I can separate the concept of a Higher Power from past negative religious experiences that may have wounded me

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

3. I am open to exploring spirituality in ways that feel authentic rather than prescribed or forced

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

4. I do not insist that I must fully understand or define a Higher Power before I can begin to believe

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

5. I recognize that my own power was insufficient to solve my addiction and am willing to seek something greater

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

6. I can accept that others' experiences with a Higher Power are valid even when they differ from mine

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

7. I am willing to experiment with spiritual practices (prayer, meditation, surrender) even without certainty

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

8. I am moving away from needing to control what my Higher Power looks like and toward allowing the concept to evolve

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

CHECK YOURSELF · CHECK-IN 4 OF 5

Trust & Willingness

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

1. I am willing to trust the process of recovery even when I don't fully understand how it works

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

2. I can identify areas where my unwillingness or resistance is blocking my ability to believe

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

3. I am learning to trust other people in recovery — their experience, their guidance, their care

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

4. I recognize that my inability to trust has been damaged by addiction and the experiences surrounding it

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

5. I am willing to act on faith — to take recovery actions before I have full certainty they will work

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

6. I am becoming more comfortable with not having all the answers

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

7. I can distinguish between healthy skepticism (questioning to learn) and diseased resistance (refusing to try)

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

8. I am gradually building trust in a recovery process that has worked for millions of others

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

YOUR EXERCISE

Higher Power Exploration Lab

Exploring What 'Greater Than Ourselves' Means to You

An Open Exploration

This is not a theology quiz — it is an exploration. There are no wrong answers. The goal is to honestly explore multiple concepts of a Higher Power and notice which ones resonate, which ones repel, and which ones invite further investigation.

The Recovery Fellowship

The collective wisdom, experience, and support of people in recovery

How has the group demonstrated power greater than your individual capacity?

☐ Resonates strongly ☐ Interesting to explore ☐ Neutral ☐ Creates resistance ☐ Not for me

Universal Principles

Honesty, love, compassion, courage, service, integrity — principles that produce results beyond willpower

When you practice these principles, do the results exceed what self-will could produce?

☐ Resonates strongly ☐ Interesting to explore ☐ Neutral ☐ Creates resistance ☐ Not for me

Nature / The Universe

The natural order, the force that turns seeds into trees, moves oceans, and sustains life

What in nature demonstrates a power greater than yourself?

☐ Resonates strongly ☐ Interesting to explore ☐ Neutral ☐ Creates resistance ☐ Not for me

Love / Connection

The force that connects humans to each other, that motivates sacrifice and care

Where has love been a power greater than yourself in your life?

☐ Resonates strongly ☐ Interesting to explore ☐ Neutral ☐ Creates resistance ☐ Not for me

God / The Divine

A personal God or divine presence — understood through any tradition or personal experience

If a personal God resonates with you, describe your understanding. If not, what creates resistance?

☐ Resonates strongly ☐ Interesting to explore ☐ Neutral ☐ Creates resistance ☐ Not for me

Something Unnamed

An unnamed, undefined force that you have experienced but cannot articulate

Is there something at work in your recovery that you can feel but cannot name? Describe it as honestly as you can.

☐ Resonates strongly ☐ Interesting to explore ☐ Neutral ☐ Creates resistance ☐ Not for me

Your Higher Power — Current Understanding

1. Based on your exploration, what concept(s) of a Higher Power feel most authentic to you right now?

Develop your understanding...

2. Write a description of your Higher Power as you currently understand it — knowing this description is allowed to be incomplete and to evolve.

Develop your understanding...

3. What is the single most important thing your Higher Power needs to be for your recovery?

Develop your understanding...

YOUR EXERCISE

Trust Reconstruction Inventory

Rebuilding the Capacity to Rely on Something Greater

Trust and Step Two

Step Two requires trust — trust that something can help, trust in a process you don't fully understand. For most addicts, trust has been systematically destroyed. This inventory examines the state of your trust and begins the process of rebuilding it.

Trust in Yourself

1. How did your addiction destroy your ability to trust yourself? How many promises to yourself did you break?

2. What would it take to begin rebuilding trust in yourself? What small, consistent actions could demonstrate self-trustworthiness?

3. Can you trust your own judgment about recovery, or do you need to rely on others' judgment?

Trust in Other People

1. Who has betrayed your trust in significant ways? How have those betrayals affected your willingness to trust anyone?

2. Who in your recovery has demonstrated trustworthiness? What have they done to earn it?

3. What would it take for you to trust a sponsor, a group, or a therapist with your honest truth?

Trust in the Recovery Process

1. Do you trust that the 12-step process works, or are you going through the motions while secretly doubting?

2. What evidence have you seen that the recovery process produces real results in real people?

3. What would "trusting the process" look like in concrete, daily terms?

YOUR EXERCISE

Spiritual Practices Experimentation Log

Trying It Before You Believe It

Act Your Way Into Belief

You don't have to believe before you begin practicing. Many people in recovery discover belief THROUGH practice — not the other way around. Try each one with an open mind, record what happens, and let the evidence accumulate.

Prayer / Asking for Help

Talking to your Higher Power — however you understand it. Asking for guidance, strength, or willingness.

Try praying (or asking for help) daily for one week. Describe what you said, how it felt, and what happened.

What resistance did you experience? What surprised you?

Meditation / Quiet Listening

Sitting in silence, focusing on breath, and allowing your mind to quiet.

Try sitting in quiet meditation for 5-10 minutes daily. Describe your experience.

Was stillness difficult? What arose when you stopped distracting yourself?

Gratitude Practice

Deliberately focusing attention on what is good, what is present, and what has been given.

List 10 things you are genuinely grateful for today. What did the act of listing them do to your internal state?

How does gratitude practice affect your relationship with hope and belief?

Service / Helping Others

Getting outside yourself by helping someone else. Service connects you to something greater than self-interest.

Describe a recent act of service in recovery. What happened inside you when you helped someone else?

How does helping others affect your sense of connection to a Power greater than yourself?

Surrender Practice

Deliberately releasing control of a specific situation, outcome, or fear.

Identify one thing you're trying to control and practice releasing it. What happened when you let go?

What does surrender feel like in your body? Is it relief or terror?

PART 5 OF 5 · READING

The Process of Restoration: What Sanity Looks Like in Recovery

Restoration to sanity does not happen all at once. It is more like dawn — a gradual lightening of the darkness that happens so slowly you may not notice it until you realize you can see colors you hadn't seen in years. Understanding what restoration looks like — concretely, practically, in daily life — is essential for recognizing it when it begins to happen.

The first and most visible sign of restoration is the lifting of the obsession to use. This is often the newcomer's first experience of a Power greater than themselves at work. You walked into recovery with a mind consumed by thoughts of using, and at some point — through meetings, sponsorship, working steps, and the grace of something you don't fully understand — those thoughts began to lose their power. Your own willpower could not accomplish this — it tried and failed a thousand times. Something else accomplished it.

Restoration to sanity also appears in the normalization of thinking. During active addiction, your thinking was characterized by extremes: all-or-nothing conclusions, catastrophizing, personalization, emotional reasoning. In recovery, thinking gradually becomes more balanced, more flexible, more grounded in reality. You begin to see options where you once saw only dead ends. You begin to assess consequences before acting rather than after.

Emotional regulation is another dimension of restoration. In active addiction, emotions were either overwhelming or absent. In recovery, you gradually develop the capacity to experience emotions without being destroyed by them, to sit with discomfort without needing immediate chemical relief.

Restoration also shows up in relationships. Active addiction makes authentic relationships impossible. In recovery, as sanity returns, relationships begin to shift. You become capable of honesty, vulnerability, accountability, and reciprocity. Trust — given and received — begins to rebuild.

Perhaps the most profound restoration is spiritual — the return of meaning, purpose, and connection to something larger than your own survival. Active addiction narrows existence to a single point: getting and using. Recovery gradually reopens the aperture, revealing a world of possibility, beauty, service, love, and purpose that addiction had eclipsed.

It is important to understand that restoration is not perfection. Sanity in recovery does not mean you will never make a bad decision or have an irrational thought. It means you will have the capacity to recognize these moments, correct course, ask for help, and return to a baseline of healthy functioning.

Reflection Questions

1. Have you experienced the lifting of the obsession to use? How did it happen? Was it sudden or gradual? What role did something greater than yourself play in that lifting?

2. In what ways has your thinking become more sane since entering recovery? Where do you notice more balance, flexibility, and grounding in reality?

3. How has your emotional regulation improved? Can you experience difficult emotions without needing to escape them chemically?

4. What does restoration of sanity look like in your relationships? How have your connections with others changed since you began recovery?

5. If restoration is a gradual process rather than a dramatic event, can you identify specific moments where you noticed "dawn breaking" — small shifts that indicated sanity was returning?

CHECK YOURSELF · CHECK-IN 5 OF 5

Belief in Practice

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

1. I engage in at least one daily practice that connects me to something greater than my individual will

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

2. I have taken concrete actions based on Step Two — not just thought about it, but acted on it

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

3. I have experienced moments where something greater than my own effort seemed to be working in my recovery

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

4. I actively seek out experiences that strengthen my belief — meetings, conversations, spiritual practices

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

5. I am developing my own personal understanding of a Higher Power rather than simply adopting someone else's

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

6. I practice asking for help — from others and from whatever Higher Power I am coming to understand

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

7. I can point to specific evidence in my own recovery where something beyond my willpower was at work

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

8. I am building a relationship with my Higher Power that is growing and deepening over time

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

YOUR EXERCISE

Evidence of Restoration

Identifying Where Sanity Is Already Returning

Dawn Is Already Breaking

Restoration often happens so gradually that you don't recognize it. This exercise asks you to look for specific, concrete evidence that sanity is returning — even in small ways. These signs are proof that Step Two's promise is not theoretical.

Restoration in Thinking

1. Describe a recent situation where your thinking was more balanced or realistic than it would have been during active addiction.

2. Has the mental obsession with using decreased? When did you first notice the reduction?

3. Can you identify a moment when you caught a distorted thought and corrected it?

Restoration in Emotions

1. Describe a recent emotion you experienced fully without needing to numb or escape. What was that like?

2. Has your emotional range expanded — can you access feelings that were unavailable during active addiction?

3. Can you sit with discomfort longer than you could before?

Restoration in Relationships

1. Describe a relationship that is improving because of your recovery. What is different about how you show up?

2. Have you been honest with someone when you would have previously lied?

3. Are you more capable of listening, being present, or showing up for others?

Restoration in Daily Functioning

1. What responsibilities are you handling today that were neglected during active addiction?

2. Has your decision-making improved? Describe a recent decision that reflected sanity.

3. What area of your daily life is most noticeably better than it was six months ago?

YOUR EXERCISE

Writing Your Personal Step Two

Putting It All Together — Your Personal Document of Belief

The Importance of Writing

A written Step Two becomes a living document — something you can return to when doubt visits, when hope fades, or when you need reminding of how far you've come. Write honestly, write thoroughly, and write for yourself.

Part 1: The Insanity I'm Being Restored From

Drawing from Exercise 2, describe the insanity of your addiction — the patterns of thinking, behaving, and living that characterized active use.

Describe the insanity of your addiction in full — the repetitive patterns, the distorted thinking, the emotional chaos, the self-deception...

Part 2: My Journey of Coming to Believe

Part 3: My Understanding of a Power Greater Than Myself

Describe your current understanding of a Higher Power. It doesn't have to be complete or certain. It just has to be honest.

Describe your Higher Power as you currently understand it — what it is, how it works in your life, what you believe and what you're still uncertain about...

Part 4: Evidence of Restoration in My Life

Drawing from Exercise 7, describe the specific ways sanity is being restored in your life.

Document the evidence that restoration is happening — in your thinking, emotions, relationships, daily life, and sense of meaning...

Part 5: My Step Two Declaration

Write your personal Step Two declaration — a statement in your own words that captures everything you have come to believe, are coming to believe, and are willing to believe.

I am coming to believe that... Something greater than my own will is... What I have seen, experienced, and begun to trust tells me that...

Final Reflection

1. What was the hardest part of writing this Step Two? What did the process reveal?

2. How does it feel to see your Step Two written out? Is there more hope on this page than you expected?

3. Who will you share this Step Two with? A sponsor? A counselor? A trusted friend? When?

4. How does Step Two prepare you for Step Three — the decision to turn your will and life over to the care of a Higher Power?
