

NA Steps Six & Seven Deep Dive

NA Deep Dive · The Recovery Files

"We Were Entirely Ready to Have God Remove All These Defects of Character"

"We Humbly Asked Him to Remove Our Shortcomings"

Narcotics Anonymous — Steps 6 & 7 · Clinging · Attached to defects · Humble · Asking for change

In this workbook

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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

Step Six: What Does "Entirely Ready" Actually Mean?

Step Six of Narcotics Anonymous states: "We were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character." On the surface, this step seems simple — perhaps even passive. You have identified your defects in Step Four, shared them in Step Five, and now you simply need to be "ready" to have them removed. What could be so difficult about readiness?

In practice, Step Six is one of the most challenging steps in recovery because it requires something that most people in addiction have never done: genuine willingness to surrender control over their own character. This is not the same as wanting to be a better person. Most people want to be better. It is not even the same as wishing your defects would disappear. Most people wish that too. Step Six is the conscious, deliberate decision to become entirely willing — not partially willing, not conditionally willing, not willing when it is convenient — to have your character defects removed by a power greater than yourself.

The word "entirely" is the key to understanding this step, and it is also the source of most resistance. "Entirely ready" means all of them. Not just the defects that embarrass you. Not just the defects that cause obvious harm. All of them — including the ones you secretly enjoy, the ones you rely on for protection, the ones that have become so familiar they feel like essential parts of who you are.

Consider what this means in practice. Your dishonesty has protected you from consequences — are you entirely ready to let it go? Your controlling behavior has given you a sense of safety in an unpredictable world — are you entirely ready to release that? Your resentments have given you a sense of righteous superiority — are you entirely ready to surrender them?

The NA Basic Text acknowledges that most people cannot achieve perfect readiness. The goal is not perfect willingness but the honest, earnest movement toward willingness. You may not be entirely ready today. But are you moving in that direction? Are you willing to become willing?

Step Six also requires confronting a specific illusion that plagues people in recovery: the belief that you can manage your defects yourself. "I know I am controlling, so I will just try harder not to control." This self-management approach works temporarily, then fails spectacularly, because the defects are driven by fears and beliefs that willpower alone cannot address. Step Six asks you to stop managing and start surrendering.

This does not mean you are passive. It means you are participatory. You participate by cultivating willingness. You participate by practicing contrary actions. You participate by asking for help. But you let go of the illusion that you — the person whose self-will created the problem — can also be the sole source of the solution.

Reflection Questions

1. When you hear the phrase "entirely ready," what is your honest reaction? Does it feel achievable, overwhelming, or somewhere in between?

2. Which character defects are you most willing to release? Which are you most reluctant to let go of? What makes the difference?

3. Have you tried to manage or control your defects through willpower? What were the results?

4. What would it look like to become "willing to become willing" for the defects you are not yet ready to surrender?

5. If your character defects have served a function — protecting you, getting you what you wanted, helping you cope — what is the fear about releasing them?

CHECK YOURSELF · CHECK-IN 1 OF 5

Willingness to Change

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

1. I genuinely want my character defects to be removed, not just the consequences of my character defects

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

2. I understand that being ready for change is different from being perfect — readiness is a direction, not a destination

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

3. I am willing to let go of character defects even when they have felt protective or useful to me
☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5
4. I recognize that my defects of character are not permanent features of my identity but learned patterns that can change
☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5
5. I am willing to experience the discomfort that comes with changing familiar patterns of behavior
☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5
6. I do not expect change to be instantaneous but I am willing to participate in a gradual process of transformation
☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5
7. I am ready to stop justifying, defending, or making excuses for my defective behavior
☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5
8. I am willing to let go of defects even when I am not sure what will replace them
☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

YOUR EXERCISE

Defect-by-Defect Willingness Audit

How Ready Are You — Defect by Defect?

Honest Assessment

Step Six says "entirely ready to have ALL these defects removed." This exercise examines your willingness defect by defect, revealing where you are genuinely ready and where resistance remains.

Selfishness / Self-Centeredness

How active is this defect currently? (1 = rarely, 10 = daily)

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐ 6 ☐ 7 ☐ 8 ☐ 9 ☐ 10

How willing are you to have this removed? (1 = not at all, 10 = entirely ready)

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐ 6 ☐ 7 ☐ 8 ☐ 9 ☐ 10

If your willingness is below 7, what is holding you back?

Dishonesty / Deception

How active is this defect currently? (1 = rarely, 10 = daily)

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐ 6 ☐ 7 ☐ 8 ☐ 9 ☐ 10

How willing are you to have this removed? (1 = not at all, 10 = entirely ready)

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐ 6 ☐ 7 ☐ 8 ☐ 9 ☐ 10

If your willingness is below 7, what is holding you back?

Resentfulness / Bitterness

How active is this defect currently? (1 = rarely, 10 = daily)

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐ 6 ☐ 7 ☐ 8 ☐ 9 ☐ 10

How willing are you to have this removed? (1 = not at all, 10 = entirely ready)

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐ 6 ☐ 7 ☐ 8 ☐ 9 ☐ 10

If your willingness is below 7, what is holding you back?

Fear-Based Living

How active is this defect currently? (1 = rarely, 10 = daily)

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐ 6 ☐ 7 ☐ 8 ☐ 9 ☐ 10

How willing are you to have this removed? (1 = not at all, 10 = entirely ready)

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐ 6 ☐ 7 ☐ 8 ☐ 9 ☐ 10

If your willingness is below 7, what is holding you back?

Control / Manipulation

How active is this defect currently? (1 = rarely, 10 = daily)

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐ 6 ☐ 7 ☐ 8 ☐ 9 ☐ 10

How willing are you to have this removed? (1 = not at all, 10 = entirely ready)

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐ 6 ☐ 7 ☐ 8 ☐ 9 ☐ 10

If your willingness is below 7, what is holding you back?

Pride / Grandiosity

How active is this defect currently? (1 = rarely, 10 = daily)

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐ 6 ☐ 7 ☐ 8 ☐ 9 ☐ 10

How willing are you to have this removed? (1 = not at all, 10 = entirely ready)

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐ 6 ☐ 7 ☐ 8 ☐ 9 ☐ 10

If your willingness is below 7, what is holding you back?

Self-Pity / Victimhood

How active is this defect currently? (1 = rarely, 10 = daily)

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐ 6 ☐ 7 ☐ 8 ☐ 9 ☐ 10

How willing are you to have this removed? (1 = not at all, 10 = entirely ready)

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐ 6 ☐ 7 ☐ 8 ☐ 9 ☐ 10

If your willingness is below 7, what is holding you back?

People-Pleasing / Approval-Seeking

How active is this defect currently? (1 = rarely, 10 = daily)

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐ 6 ☐ 7 ☐ 8 ☐ 9 ☐ 10

How willing are you to have this removed? (1 = not at all, 10 = entirely ready)

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐ 6 ☐ 7 ☐ 8 ☐ 9 ☐ 10

If your willingness is below 7, what is holding you back?

Isolation / Emotional Withdrawal

How active is this defect currently? (1 = rarely, 10 = daily)

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐ 6 ☐ 7 ☐ 8 ☐ 9 ☐ 10

How willing are you to have this removed? (1 = not at all, 10 = entirely ready)

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐ 6 ☐ 7 ☐ 8 ☐ 9 ☐ 10

If your willingness is below 7, what is holding you back?

Impatience / Intolerance

How active is this defect currently? (1 = rarely, 10 = daily)

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐ 6 ☐ 7 ☐ 8 ☐ 9 ☐ 10

How willing are you to have this removed? (1 = not at all, 10 = entirely ready)

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐ 6 ☐ 7 ☐ 8 ☐ 9 ☐ 10

If your willingness is below 7, what is holding you back?

Jealousy / Envy

How active is this defect currently? (1 = rarely, 10 = daily)

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐ 6 ☐ 7 ☐ 8 ☐ 9 ☐ 10

How willing are you to have this removed? (1 = not at all, 10 = entirely ready)

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐ 6 ☐ 7 ☐ 8 ☐ 9 ☐ 10

If your willingness is below 7, what is holding you back?

Laziness / Avoidance

How active is this defect currently? (1 = rarely, 10 = daily)

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐ 6 ☐ 7 ☐ 8 ☐ 9 ☐ 10

How willing are you to have this removed? (1 = not at all, 10 = entirely ready)

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐ 6 ☐ 7 ☐ 8 ☐ 9 ☐ 10

If your willingness is below 7, what is holding you back?

Willingness Audit Summary

1. Which defects have the highest willingness scores? What makes you most ready to release these?

2. Which defects have the biggest gap between how active they are and how willing you are to release them?

3. What is the common thread among the defects you are most reluctant to surrender?

4. For your lowest-willingness defect, what would it take to move from unwilling to "willing to become willing"?

PART 2 OF 5 · READING

Step Seven: The Practice of Humble Asking

Step Seven of Narcotics Anonymous states: "We humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings." If Step Six is about becoming ready, Step Seven is about taking action on that readiness — and the action is both simple and revolutionary: you ask.

The word "humbly" is the heart of this step, and it is perhaps the most misunderstood word in recovery. Humility is not humiliation. It is not groveling, self-abasement, or the belief that you are worthless. Humility is the accurate assessment of your relationship to reality — the clear-eyed recognition that you are neither the center of the universe nor its most insignificant inhabitant. You are a human being with genuine strengths and genuine limitations, and one of your limitations is the inability to transform your own character through sheer force of will.

The NA Basic Text describes humility as the recognition of who you really are, combined with the willingness to become who you can be. Humility says: "I have these defects. I did not choose to develop them — they emerged as responses to pain, fear, and survival needs — but I am responsible for them now. I cannot remove them alone. I need help. And I am willing to ask for it."

This asking is not a one-time event. The Step Seven Prayer, however you formulate it, is a daily practice — a recurring, conscious act of surrender that you engage in every time your defects activate, every time your old patterns reassert themselves, every time you notice that self-will is running the show again.

Many people struggle with Step Seven because they misunderstand what "removal" means. They expect their defects to disappear — to wake up one morning and discover that the anger, the dishonesty, the self-centeredness has simply evaporated. This is not how character change typically works. What most people experience is a gradual shift: the defect is still present, but its grip loosens. You still feel the pull of dishonesty, but you are more aware of it and more able to choose honesty instead. The defect does not disappear — its power diminishes, and your capacity to choose differently increases.

This is why Steps Six and Seven are inseparable partners. Step Six provides the willingness. Step Seven provides the mechanism. Together, they create the conditions for character transformation — not through white-knuckle self-improvement, but through the combination of honest willingness, humble asking, daily practice, and trust in a process greater than your own intellect.

One of the most beautiful aspects of Step Seven is that it removes the burden of perfection. You are not expected to fix yourself. You are expected to be willing, to ask, and to participate. The transformation itself is a collaboration between your willingness and a power beyond your control.

Reflection Questions

1. How do you understand humility? Is there a difference between humility as you have experienced it in recovery and humiliation as you may have experienced it in active addiction?

2. What does "asking" look like for you practically? If you have a Higher Power, how do you communicate with it?

3. Have you experienced the gradual loosening of a defect rather than its sudden removal? Which defect has shifted the most since you entered recovery?

4. Where in your daily life could you practice the Step Seven pause — noticing a defect activating, pausing, asking for help, and choosing differently?

5. How does the idea that you are not expected to fix yourself — only to be willing and ask for help — change your relationship to your own character defects?

CHECK YOURSELF · CHECK-IN 2 OF 5

Spiritual Openness

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

1. I have a relationship with a Higher Power, however I understand that concept, that I can turn to for help with my defects

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

2. I am willing to ask my Higher Power for the removal of my shortcomings rather than trying to remove them myself

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

3. I practice some form of prayer, meditation, or conscious contact with a power greater than myself

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

4. I trust that a process beyond my own understanding can produce change that my willpower alone cannot

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

5. I am developing a spiritual practice that supports ongoing character development

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

6. I am open to spiritual growth even if my concept of a Higher Power is still evolving

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

7. I can distinguish between religious dogma that does not serve me and spiritual principles that support my recovery

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

8. I believe that surrender is not giving up but gaining access to resources I cannot access through self-will alone

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

YOUR EXERCISE

Step Seven Prayer & Surrender Practice

Humbly Asking for the Removal of Shortcomings

Traditional Step Seven Prayer

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

1. Read this prayer slowly. What does each phrase mean to you personally? Where do you feel resistance and where do you feel resonance?

2. The prayer says "all of me, good and bad" — what does it mean to offer ALL of yourself, including the parts you are ashamed of?

3. The prayer asks for removal of defects that stand in the way of "usefulness." How do your defects prevent you from being useful to others?

4. If this language does not resonate with you, how would you express the same intention in your own words?

Your Personal Step Seven Prayer

Write Your Own

Many people find it more meaningful to write their own Step Seven prayer in their own language, addressing their own Higher Power. Express your willingness, your humility, your specific requests, and your commitment.

Daily Surrender Practice

For each defect, write a specific daily surrender statement that you will use when the defect activates.

When I notice myself being selfish, I will pause and say...

When I am tempted to be dishonest, I will pause and say...

When resentment arises, I will pause and say...

When fear is driving my behavior, I will pause and say...

When I am trying to control, I will pause and say...

PART 3 OF 5 · READING

Why We Cling to Our Defects: The Paradox of Familiar Pain

One of the most confounding experiences in recovery is the discovery that you are attached to the very defects that are destroying you. Why would anyone cling to dishonesty when honesty would serve them better? Why would anyone resist releasing anger when resentment is poisoning their recovery?

The answer lies in a fundamental principle of human psychology: the familiar is preferred over the unknown, even when the familiar is painful. Your character defects are not random quirks. They are adaptations — survival strategies that developed in response to specific conditions of pain, fear, or deprivation. The child who learned to manipulate did so because direct honesty was not safe. The person who learned to control did so because the uncontrolled environment was dangerous. These adaptations served a genuine protective function when they were first developed. The problem is that they persisted long after the original threat disappeared.

This integration is the core of the problem. When a character defect has been part of you for decades, it does not feel like a defect — it feels like identity. "I am a controlling person" is not experienced as a behavior that can be changed but as a statement of fundamental nature. The defect has become confused with the self, and surrendering the defect feels like surrendering a piece of who you are.

This is why Step Six requires courage that is often underestimated. Being "entirely ready" means being willing to lose parts of yourself — or more accurately, parts of yourself that you have mistakenly identified as essential. It means stepping into the unknown territory of who you might be without the dishonesty, without the control, without the resentment.

There is another layer to defect attachment that is rarely discussed openly: some defects produce genuine pleasure. Manipulation can feel powerful. Resentment can feel righteous. Grandiosity can feel intoxicating. Self-pity can feel comforting. Being honest about the payoff your defects deliver is essential for understanding why you cling to them.

The path through this paradox is not to pretend you are ready when you are not, or to force willingness that is not genuine. The path is to become increasingly honest about what each defect costs you and what it gives you, and to allow that cost-benefit analysis — combined with your growing trust in recovery — to gradually shift the balance from attachment toward willingness.

Reflection Questions

1. Which of your character defects feels most like "who you are" rather than "what you do"? Can you begin to separate the behavior from your identity?

2. What protective function did your primary defects originally serve? What were they defending you from? Is that threat still present?

3. Be honest: which defects do you secretly enjoy or benefit from? What is the payoff you receive? What is the cost?

4. What scares you about the idea of releasing your defects? What do you fear about who you might be without them?

5. If you could release one defect completely today with no negative consequences, which would you choose? What does that choice tell you about your willingness?

CHECK YOURSELF · CHECK-IN 3 OF 5

Attachment to Defects

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

1. I secretly enjoy some of my character defects and am reluctant to release them

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

2. I use certain defects (manipulation, control, charm) because they get me what I want

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

3. I am afraid of who I will be without my defects — they feel like part of my identity

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

4. I have tried to control or manage my defects on my own rather than surrendering them to a Higher Power

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

5. Part of me believes I need my defects to survive — that without them I will be defenseless

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

6. I cling to certain resentments because they feel justified and I am not ready to let go

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

7. I resist humility because I associate it with weakness, submission, or being taken advantage of

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

8. I would rather manage my defects selectively than become entirely ready to have all of them removed

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

YOUR EXERCISE

Defect Payoff & Cost Analysis

What Does Each Defect Give You — and What Does It Take?

The Honest Ledger

Every defect provides a payoff — that is why you keep it. But every defect also exacts a cost. This exercise makes both visible so you can make an informed decision about whether the deal is still worth taking.

Your Primary Defect

Name the defect specifically:

THE PAYOFF — What this defect gives me:

THE COST — What this defect takes from me:

The Verdict: Is the payoff worth the cost? What would your life look like without this defect?

Your Second Most Active Defect

Name the defect specifically:

THE PAYOFF — What this defect gives me:

THE COST — What this defect takes from me:

The Verdict: Is the payoff worth the cost? What would your life look like without this defect?

Your Third Most Active Defect

Name the defect specifically:

THE PAYOFF — What this defect gives me:

THE COST — What this defect takes from me:

The Verdict: Is the payoff worth the cost? What would your life look like without this defect?

The Defect You Are Most Reluctant to Release

Name the defect specifically:

THE PAYOFF — What this defect gives me:

THE COST — What this defect takes from me:

The Verdict: Is the payoff worth the cost? What would your life look like without this defect?

A Defect Others See That You Minimize

Name the defect specifically:

THE PAYOFF — What this defect gives me:

THE COST — What this defect takes from me:

The Verdict: Is the payoff worth the cost? What would your life look like without this defect?

YOUR EXERCISE

Attachment Inventory

Understanding Why You Hold On to What Hurts You

The Roots of Clinging

Attachment to defects is not irrational — it is deeply human. Your defects developed as adaptations to real pain, and releasing them feels like losing a part of yourself.

Identity Attachment

Defects that feel like essential parts of who you are — "I AM this way."

Which of your defects fall into this category of attachment? Name them.

Where did this attachment originate? What experience taught you to cling to this defect?

What belief sustains the attachment? "I cannot let go because I believe..."

Challenge the belief: Is it actually true? What evidence exists for and against it?

What would increase your willingness to release this attachment?

Protective Attachment

Defects you keep because they feel necessary for survival — "Without this, I will be hurt."

Which of your defects fall into this category of attachment? Name them.

Where did this attachment originate? What experience taught you to cling to this defect?

What belief sustains the attachment? "I cannot let go because I believe..."

Challenge the belief: Is it actually true? What evidence exists for and against it?

What would increase your willingness to release this attachment?

Pleasure Attachment

Defects you keep because they feel good — "I enjoy this and I do not want to give it up."

Which of your defects fall into this category of attachment? Name them.

Where did this attachment originate? What experience taught you to cling to this defect?

What belief sustains the attachment? "I cannot let go because I believe..."

Challenge the belief: Is it actually true? What evidence exists for and against it?

What would increase your willingness to release this attachment?

Familiarity Attachment

Defects you keep because they are known — "At least I know what to expect with this pattern."

Which of your defects fall into this category of attachment? Name them.

Where did this attachment originate? What experience taught you to cling to this defect?

What belief sustains the attachment? "I cannot let go because I believe..."

Challenge the belief: Is it actually true? What evidence exists for and against it?

What would increase your willingness to release this attachment?

Justified Attachment

Defects you keep because you believe they are warranted — "I have every right to feel this way."

Which of your defects fall into this category of attachment? Name them.

Where did this attachment originate? What experience taught you to cling to this defect?

What belief sustains the attachment? "I cannot let go because I believe..."

Challenge the belief: Is it actually true? What evidence exists for and against it?

What would increase your willingness to release this attachment?

YOUR EXERCISE

Identity Beyond Defects

Who Are You Becoming As Your Defects Are Removed?

The New Identity

One of the deepest fears about releasing defects is: 'Who will I be without them?' This exercise helps you identify, claim, and develop the positive qualities that emerge as defects are removed. You are not just losing defects — you are gaining virtues.

Character Virtues

Select the qualities that are genuinely emerging in your recovery — not aspirations, but qualities you can point to with evidence:

- ☐ Honest ☐ Kind ☐ Courageous ☐ Generous ☐ Patient ☐ Humble ☐ Grateful ☐ Faithful ☐
Compassionate ☐ Forgiving

Give evidence — a specific recent example of one of these qualities in action:

Name a specific moment when this quality was genuinely present...

Recovery Qualities

Select the qualities that are genuinely emerging in your recovery — not aspirations, but qualities you can point to with evidence:

- ☐ Willing ☐ Teachable ☐ Persistent ☐ Connected ☐ Accountable ☐ Surrendered ☐ Growing ☐
Serving ☐ Hopeful ☐ Present

Give evidence — a specific recent example of one of these qualities in action:

Name a specific moment when this quality was genuinely present...

Relational Strengths

Select the qualities that are genuinely emerging in your recovery — not aspirations, but qualities you can point to with evidence:

☐ Good listener ☐ Loyal ☐ Empathetic ☐ Trustworthy ☐ Supportive ☐ Vulnerable ☐ Respectful ☐ Encouraging ☐ Authentic

Give evidence — a specific recent example of one of these qualities in action:

Name a specific moment when this quality was genuinely present...

Your Emerging Identity

1. Who are you becoming? Write a description of the person who is emerging as your defects are being addressed.

2. What is the most significant character change you have experienced since entering recovery?

3. How does identifying your emerging virtues affect your willingness to release remaining defects?

4. Write an identity statement: "I am a person who is learning to be ____, growing in ____, and becoming more ____ every day."

PART 4 OF 5 · READING

The Anatomy of Humility: What It Is, What It Is Not, and How to Practice It

Humility is the foundation upon which Steps Six and Seven rest, and it is one of the most consistently misunderstood concepts in recovery. For many people — particularly those whose addiction involved either grandiosity or its opposite, crushing self-contempt — the word "humility" triggers immediate resistance. It sounds like submission. It sounds like weakness. None of these associations accurately describe what humility means in recovery.

Genuine humility is the accurate perception of yourself in relation to reality. It is neither inflation nor deflation. It is not believing you are worse than you are (that is shame). It is not believing you are better than you are (that is grandiosity). It is seeing yourself clearly — your genuine strengths and your genuine limitations — without distortion in either direction.

In the context of Steps Six and Seven, humility has several practical dimensions. The first is the honest acknowledgment that your character defects exist and are causing harm. Humility strips away qualifications and says simply: "I have these defects, they cause harm, and I need help with them."

The second dimension is the acceptance that you cannot fix yourself alone. Steps Six and Seven ask for a more expansive admission: that you are also unable, through willpower alone, to transform your own character. Your best thinking, your strongest resolutions, your most determined efforts at self-improvement have all been insufficient to produce lasting change in your deepest patterns.

The third dimension is the willingness to ask for help — specifically, to ask a Higher Power for help. The willingness to say "I cannot do this alone, and I am asking for help from something greater than my own willpower" is an act of spiritual courage, not spiritual weakness.

The fourth dimension — and the one most relevant to daily practice — is the willingness to be teachable. The humble person is a learner. They listen to feedback without defensiveness. They consider perspectives other than their own. They approach their recovery with the orientation of a student, not an expert.

Practically, humility looks like this: you notice that you are being controlling in a conversation. You pause. You acknowledge the defect to yourself: "I am controlling right now because I am afraid." You choose a different behavior. And when you fail — when the defect wins despite your awareness — you acknowledge the failure without collapsing into shame, ask for help to do better next time, and continue. This cycle of awareness, acknowledgment, asking, and continuing is the daily practice of humility.

Reflection Questions

1. What has your understanding of humility been until now? Has it been closer to the accurate definition (clear self-perception) or the distorted one (humiliation, submission, weakness)?

2. Where are you currently on the spectrum between grandiosity and self-contempt? How does finding the middle — accurate self-assessment — feel different from either extreme?

3. In which area of your life are you most teachable? In which area are you most resistant to feedback?

4. Can you recall a specific moment when you practiced genuine humility — acknowledged a limitation, asked for help, received feedback without defensiveness?

5. If humility is the foundation of Steps Six and Seven, how strong is your foundation right now? What would strengthen it?

CHECK YOURSELF · CHECK-IN 4 OF 5

Humility Capacity

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

1. I understand that humility is not humiliation — it is an accurate view of myself in relation to others and to a Higher Power

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

2. I can ask for help without feeling diminished or threatened

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

3. I accept that I cannot change my character through willpower alone and that I need help beyond my own resources
☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5
4. I am comfortable acknowledging my limitations without collapsing into self-pity or shame
☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5
5. I can receive feedback about my defects without becoming defensive, dismissive, or angry
☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5
6. I recognize that my way of running my life has produced unacceptable results and I am willing to try a different approach
☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5
7. I can admit when I am wrong promptly and without excessive drama or self-flagellation
☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5
8. I am developing a genuine desire to be of service to others rather than primarily serving myself
☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

YOUR EXERCISE

Humility Self-Assessment

Measuring Your Capacity for Genuine Humility

The Humility Spectrum

Humility exists on a spectrum between grandiosity (inflated self-perception) and self-contempt (deflated self-perception). Genuine humility is the accurate middle — seeing yourself clearly without distortion.

Receiving Feedback

1. How do I respond when someone points out a flaw or mistake?

2. Can I hear criticism without becoming defensive, angry, or crushed?

3. Do I seek feedback or only accept it when forced?

Where do you fall on the humility spectrum for this area? (1 = pure grandiosity, 5 = genuine humility, 10 = self-contempt)

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐ 6 ☐ 7 ☐ 8 ☐ 9 ☐ 10

Asking for Help

1. How comfortable am I asking for help when I need it?

2. Do I wait until crisis before reaching out, or can I ask before things get bad?

3. What does asking for help mean about me in my own mind?

Where do you fall on the humility spectrum for this area? (1 = pure grandiosity, 5 = genuine humility, 10 = self-contempt)

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐ 6 ☐ 7 ☐ 8 ☐ 9 ☐ 10

Admitting Wrong

1. How quickly can I acknowledge when I am wrong?

2. Do I make excuses, deflect, or minimize before admitting fault?

3. Can I apologize sincerely without adding justification?

Where do you fall on the humility spectrum for this area? (1 = pure grandiosity, 5 = genuine humility, 10 = self-contempt)

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐ 6 ☐ 7 ☐ 8 ☐ 9 ☐ 10

Service Orientation

1. How much of my daily thinking is about what I can give versus what I can get?

2. Am I willing to serve without recognition or reward?

3. Do I help others because I genuinely care or because I want to feel good about myself?

Where do you fall on the humility spectrum for this area? (1 = pure grandiosity, 5 = genuine humility, 10 = self-contempt)

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐ 6 ☐ 7 ☐ 8 ☐ 9 ☐ 10

Teachability

1. Am I genuinely open to learning from my sponsor, counselor, and peers?

2. Can I follow suggestions even when I think I know better?

3. Do I approach recovery as a student or as someone who already has the answers?

Where do you fall on the humility spectrum for this area? (1 = pure grandiosity, 5 = genuine humility, 10 = self-contempt)

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐ 6 ☐ 7 ☐ 8 ☐ 9 ☐ 10

PART 5 OF 5 · READING

The Process of Transformation: How Character Actually Changes

Understanding how character change actually happens protects you from both unrealistic expectations and premature discouragement. Character change in recovery does not follow the pattern that most people expect. It is rarely sudden, rarely linear, and rarely complete. But it is real.

The process of character transformation in Steps Six and Seven operates through several interconnected mechanisms. The first is awareness. Before you can change a pattern, you must see it clearly. Steps Four and Five provided the initial awareness — the identification of your defects and their impact. But awareness is not a one-time event. It deepens over time. Each deepening of awareness creates a new opportunity for surrender and change.

The second mechanism is what recovery tradition calls "contrary action" — the deliberate practice of behaving in ways that are opposite to your defects. If your defect is selfishness, you practice generosity. If your defect is dishonesty, you practice truth-telling. Contrary action does not feel natural at first — it feels forced, awkward, and uncomfortable. This is normal. You are building new neural pathways, and new pathways always feel unfamiliar. With repetition, the new behavior becomes progressively easier.

The third mechanism is what might be called "spiritual erosion" — the gradual wearing away of defects through consistent spiritual practice. Daily prayer or meditation, regular meeting attendance, honest conversations with a sponsor, and ongoing self-examination create conditions in which defects slowly lose their grip. You create conditions of willingness and practice, and the removal happens through a process that often feels mysterious — you simply notice, over time, that the defect that once dominated your life now appears less frequently, with less intensity.

The fourth mechanism is relational healing. Many of your character defects developed in the context of relationships. The healing of these defects often occurs in the context of new relationships — healthy relationships in recovery where you are treated differently, where you can practice new behavior. Your sponsor who does not judge you when you are honest teaches you that honesty is safe.

It is essential to understand that this process includes setbacks. You will experience what feels like regression — days when your defects are as powerful as they ever were. These setbacks are not evidence of failure. They are part of the process. The key difference between the recovering person and the person in active addiction is not the absence of defects but the response to them. The person in recovery notices them, names them, asks for help with them, makes amends when they cause harm, and continues the work.

Reflection Questions

1. Which mechanism of change resonates most with your experience so far — awareness, contrary action, spiritual erosion, or relational healing?

2. Can you identify a character defect that has shifted since you entered recovery? What does the shift look like?

3. How do you respond to setbacks — moments when your defects reassert themselves powerfully? Do you respond with shame and self-attack, or with acknowledgment and continued effort?

4. What contrary actions are you currently practicing? Which defect are you actively working against with deliberate opposite behavior?

5. If character transformation is a lifelong process rather than a task to complete, how does that change your expectations and your patience with yourself?

CHECK YOURSELF · CHECK-IN 5 OF 5

Action & Practice Readiness

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

1. I am already taking concrete actions to address my character defects in daily life

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

2. I have specific practices in place for when my defects are activated — I do not just hope for the best

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

3. I am willing to be accountable to my sponsor, counselor, or recovery community about my ongoing defect work

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

4. I understand that defect removal is a process, not an event — I am committed to ongoing practice

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

5. I have people in my life who can point out my defects with love and I am willing to listen

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

6. I am practicing new behaviors that are the opposite of my primary defects

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

7. I am willing to make amends when my defects cause harm, even as I am working on their removal

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

8. I view character development as a lifelong practice, not a task to complete and move past

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

YOUR EXERCISE

Contrary Action Planning

Replacing Each Defect with Its Opposite Virtue

The Principle of Contrary Action

For every character defect, there is a corresponding virtue. Contrary action is the deliberate, daily practice of behaving according to the virtue when the defect activates. You do not wait until you feel virtuous. You act virtuously despite feeling the pull of the defect.

Selfishness → Generosity & Service

Selfishness

→

Generosity & Service

When does this defect typically activate? What situations, people, or emotions trigger it?

What specific contrary action can you take when the defect activates? (Be concrete — name the exact behavior)

Commit: "When [defect activates], I will [contrary action] instead."

Dishonesty → Honesty & Transparency

Dishonesty

→

Honesty & Transparency

When does this defect typically activate? What situations, people, or emotions trigger it?

What specific contrary action can you take when the defect activates? (Be concrete — name the exact behavior)

Commit: "When [defect activates], I will [contrary action] instead."

Resentment → Forgiveness & Acceptance

Resentment

→

Forgiveness & Acceptance

When does this defect typically activate? What situations, people, or emotions trigger it?

What specific contrary action can you take when the defect activates? (Be concrete — name the exact behavior)

Commit: "When [defect activates], I will [contrary action] instead."

Fear → Courage & Faith

Fear

→

Courage & Faith

When does this defect typically activate? What situations, people, or emotions trigger it?

What specific contrary action can you take when the defect activates? (Be concrete — name the exact behavior)

Commit: "When [defect activates], I will [contrary action] instead."

Control → Surrender & Trust

Control

→

Surrender & Trust

When does this defect typically activate? What situations, people, or emotions trigger it?

What specific contrary action can you take when the defect activates? (Be concrete — name the exact behavior)

Commit: "When [defect activates], I will [contrary action] instead."

Pride → Humility & Teachability

Pride

→

Humility & Teachability

When does this defect typically activate? What situations, people, or emotions trigger it?

What specific contrary action can you take when the defect activates? (Be concrete — name the exact behavior)

Commit: "When [defect activates], I will [contrary action] instead."

Self-Pity → Gratitude & Responsibility

Self-Pity

→

Gratitude & Responsibility

When does this defect typically activate? What situations, people, or emotions trigger it?

What specific contrary action can you take when the defect activates? (Be concrete — name the exact behavior)

Commit: "When [defect activates], I will [contrary action] instead."

Isolation → Connection & Reaching Out

Isolation

→

Connection & Reaching Out

When does this defect typically activate? What situations, people, or emotions trigger it?

What specific contrary action can you take when the defect activates? (Be concrete — name the exact behavior)

Commit: "When [defect activates], I will [contrary action] instead."

YOUR EXERCISE

Daily Defect Awareness Practice

7 Days of Noticing, Surrendering, and Choosing Differently

The Practice

Steps Six and Seven are daily practices. Each day, notice your defects activating, pause, ask for help, and choose differently. Each evening, take 10 minutes to review your day.

Day 1

Which defect was most active today? How did it show up?

Did you catch it in the moment or only in hindsight? What was the trigger?

Did you practice the Step Seven pause — noticing, asking for help, choosing differently?

Where did you practice a contrary action or demonstrate a virtue today?

Surrender rating today (1 = ran entirely on self-will, 10 = fully surrendered)

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐ 6 ☐ 7 ☐ 8 ☐ 9 ☐ 10

Day 2

Which defect was most active today? How did it show up?

Did you catch it in the moment or only in hindsight? What was the trigger?

Did you practice the Step Seven pause — noticing, asking for help, choosing differently?

Where did you practice a contrary action or demonstrate a virtue today?

Surrender rating today (1 = ran entirely on self-will, 10 = fully surrendered)

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐ 6 ☐ 7 ☐ 8 ☐ 9 ☐ 10

Day 3

Which defect was most active today? How did it show up?

Did you catch it in the moment or only in hindsight? What was the trigger?

Did you practice the Step Seven pause — noticing, asking for help, choosing differently?

Where did you practice a contrary action or demonstrate a virtue today?

Surrender rating today (1 = ran entirely on self-will, 10 = fully surrendered)

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐ 6 ☐ 7 ☐ 8 ☐ 9 ☐ 10

Day 4

Which defect was most active today? How did it show up?

Did you catch it in the moment or only in hindsight? What was the trigger?

Did you practice the Step Seven pause — noticing, asking for help, choosing differently?

Where did you practice a contrary action or demonstrate a virtue today?

Surrender rating today (1 = ran entirely on self-will, 10 = fully surrendered)

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐ 6 ☐ 7 ☐ 8 ☐ 9 ☐ 10

Day 5

Which defect was most active today? How did it show up?

Did you catch it in the moment or only in hindsight? What was the trigger?

Did you practice the Step Seven pause — noticing, asking for help, choosing differently?

Where did you practice a contrary action or demonstrate a virtue today?

Surrender rating today (1 = ran entirely on self-will, 10 = fully surrendered)

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐ 6 ☐ 7 ☐ 8 ☐ 9 ☐ 10

Day 6

Which defect was most active today? How did it show up?

Did you catch it in the moment or only in hindsight? What was the trigger?

Did you practice the Step Seven pause — noticing, asking for help, choosing differently?

Where did you practice a contrary action or demonstrate a virtue today?

Surrender rating today (1 = ran entirely on self-will, 10 = fully surrendered)

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐ 6 ☐ 7 ☐ 8 ☐ 9 ☐ 10

Day 7

Which defect was most active today? How did it show up?

Did you catch it in the moment or only in hindsight? What was the trigger?

Did you practice the Step Seven pause — noticing, asking for help, choosing differently?

Where did you practice a contrary action or demonstrate a virtue today?

Surrender rating today (1 = ran entirely on self-will, 10 = fully surrendered)

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐ 6 ☐ 7 ☐ 8 ☐ 9 ☐ 10

Week in Review

1. Which defect appeared most frequently? What does its persistence tell you?

2. Did your awareness improve — did you begin catching defects sooner, in the moment?

3. Did your surrender rating change over the week? What contributed to more surrendered days?

4. What contrary actions were most effective? Which new behaviors are beginning to feel more natural?

5. How will you continue this daily practice beyond this week?

YOUR EXERCISE

Relational Defect Impact Map

How Your Defects Affect the People Around You

Why This Matters

Your defects do not operate in isolation — they impact every person in your life. Mapping this impact increases your motivation for change by making the cost of your defects visible in the faces of the people you care about.

Spouse / Partner / Significant Other

Which of your defects most impacts this relationship? How does it show up?

What is the specific impact on this person? How do they experience your defect?

What has this defect already cost this relationship?

How would this relationship change if the defect were removed?

What specific contrary action could you practice in this relationship this week?

Children / Dependents

Parents / Family of Origin

Which of your defects most impacts this relationship? How does it show up?

What is the specific impact on this person? How do they experience your defect?

What has this defect already cost this relationship?

How would this relationship change if the defect were removed?

What specific contrary action could you practice in this relationship this week?

Close Friends / Recovery Community

Which of your defects most impacts this relationship? How does it show up?

What is the specific impact on this person? How do they experience your defect?

What has this defect already cost this relationship?

How would this relationship change if the defect were removed?

What specific contrary action could you practice in this relationship this week?

Work Colleagues / Professional Relationships

Which of your defects most impacts this relationship? How does it show up?

What is the specific impact on this person? How do they experience your defect?

What has this defect already cost this relationship?

How would this relationship change if the defect were removed?

What specific contrary action could you practice in this relationship this week?

YOUR EXERCISE

Integration & Living Steps Six and Seven

Making Willingness, Humility, and Surrender a Way of Life

The Ongoing Practice

Steps Six and Seven are not steps you complete and leave behind. They are a way of living — a daily orientation of willingness, humility, and surrender that continues for the rest of your recovery.

Morning Surrender

THE PRACTICE

Begin each day by asking your Higher Power for help with your defects

YOUR APPLICATION

Pray or meditate on willingness before your day begins

How will you specifically implement this practice? What time, format, commitment?

Real-Time Awareness

THE PRACTICE

Notice when defects activate during the day

YOUR APPLICATION

Pause, name the defect, ask for help, choose contrary action

How will you specifically implement this practice? What time, format, commitment?

Contrary Action

THE PRACTICE

Practice the opposite virtue when defects arise

YOUR APPLICATION

Replace selfishness with generosity, dishonesty with truth, fear with faith

How will you specifically implement this practice? What time, format, commitment?

Evening Review

THE PRACTICE

Review the day for defect activity and surrender quality

YOUR APPLICATION

Assess where defects were active, where you surrendered, where you grew

How will you specifically implement this practice? What time, format, commitment?

Accountability

THE PRACTICE

Share your defect work with sponsor and recovery community

YOUR APPLICATION

Report honestly on where you are succeeding and where you are struggling

How will you specifically implement this practice? What time, format, commitment?

Amends Readiness

THE PRACTICE

When defects cause harm, prepare to make prompt amends

YOUR APPLICATION

Steps Six and Seven directly prepare you for Steps Eight and Nine

How will you specifically implement this practice? What time, format, commitment?

Final Integration: Your Steps Six & Seven Summary

1. In three sentences, summarize what Steps Six and Seven have taught you about willingness, humility, and the process of character change.

2. What is the single most important defect you are working on right now? What does your daily practice of surrender look like?

3. How has your understanding of humility changed through this intensive?

4. What is the relationship between your Higher Power and your character change?

5. Write a letter to your defects — acknowledge them, thank them for what they tried to protect you from, and tell them that you are ready to let them go.

6. Steps Six and Seven prepare you for Steps Eight and Nine. How does the willingness and humility you have developed position you for the work of making amends?
