

NA Steps Eight & Nine Deep Dive

NA Deep Dive · The Recovery Files

"We Made a List of All Persons We Had Harmed and Became Willing to Make Amends to Them All"

"We Made Direct Amends to Such People Wherever Possible, Except When to Do So Would Injure Them or Others"

Narcotics Anonymous — Steps 8 & 9 · Harm · Unaddressed damage · Repaired · Amends made, freedom

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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 Eight: Making the List and Becoming Willing

Step Eight of Narcotics Anonymous states: "We made a list of all persons we had harmed and became willing to make amends to them all." This step contains two distinct actions — making the list and becoming willing — and both are essential. The list without the willingness is an academic exercise. The willingness without the list is vague aspiration.

If you have completed a thorough Steps Four and Five, the raw material for your Step Eight list already exists. Your resentment inventory revealed the people you harmed in the context of your resentments. Your harms inventory documented specific people you hurt and how you hurt them. Step Eight organizes this material into a specific, actionable list — not of people who harmed you, but of people YOU harmed.

This distinction is critical and generates immediate resistance. Many of the people on your list also harmed you. In some cases, they harmed you first, more severely, or more deliberately than you harmed them. Step Eight does not ask you to evaluate the fairness of the exchange. It asks you to identify the harm YOU caused, regardless of what was done to you. This is not about justice. It is about freedom.

The word "all" in Step Eight is as challenging as the word "entirely" in Step Six. "All persons we had harmed" means everyone — the people you like and the people you despise, the people who will be grateful for your amend and the people who will slam the door in your face. "All" means all. It means yourself.

The second component — becoming willing — is where the real work of Step Eight occurs. Making a list is relatively straightforward if you have done thorough inventory work. Becoming willing to actually approach these people and acknowledge the harm you caused is another matter entirely.

Willingness, in the context of Step Eight, is not enthusiasm. It is not confidence. It is not certainty that things will go well. It is the simple, difficult decision that you are willing to do what recovery requires, even when every instinct tells you to avoid it.

For many people, the willingness develops unevenly. You may be entirely willing to make amends to your mother but completely unwilling to face your ex-spouse. This unevenness is normal. The goal of Step Eight is not to manufacture perfect, uniform willingness overnight. It is to cultivate willingness — to move toward it, to pray for it, to discuss the barriers with your sponsor.

One of the most commonly overlooked names on the Step Eight list is your own. You have harmed yourself — through substance abuse, through self-destructive behavior, through years of neglect of your health, your potential, your relationships, and your values. Making amends to yourself is not self-indulgence. It is the recognition that you deserve the same accountability and restoration that you are offering to others.

Reflection Questions

1. As you consider making your list, what is your immediate emotional reaction? Which people come to mind first — and are those the easiest or the hardest names to face?

2. Are there people you have harmed who also harmed you? How do you reconcile your need to make amends with your feelings about what they did to you?

3. Have you included yourself on your list? What specific harms have you done to yourself?

4. Where is your willingness strongest? Where is it weakest? What is the common thread among the amends you most resist?

5. The NA Basic Text says that willingness can be prayed for even when it does not exist naturally. Have you asked for willingness where it is lacking?

CHECK YOURSELF · CHECK-IN 1 OF 5

List Thoroughness & Honesty

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

1. I have made a thorough list of all persons I have harmed, not just the ones I feel comfortable approaching

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

2. My list includes myself as someone I have harmed through my addiction and character defects

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

3. I have included people I harmed through neglect, absence, and broken promises — not only through direct action

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

4. I have been honest about harm I caused while sober or in recovery, not just harm during active addiction

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

5. My list includes people I may never be able to contact, people who have died, and institutions I have harmed

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

6. I have included people I also have resentments toward — recognizing that I harmed them regardless of what they did to me

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

7. I have considered harm done in all areas of life: family, romantic, friendships, work, financial, legal, and community

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

8. My list reflects my actual inventory work, not a sanitized or abbreviated version

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

CHECK YOURSELF · CHECK-IN 2 OF 5

Willingness to Make Amends

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

1. I am genuinely willing to make amends to the people on my list, even when it will be uncomfortable

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

2. I understand that making amends is for my recovery and the other person, not just to relieve my guilt

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

3. I am willing to make amends to people who may not forgive me or may react negatively

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

4. I am willing to make financial restitution where I owe money, even when it causes hardship

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

5. I am willing to approach people who intimidate me or who I fear facing

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

6. I am willing to make amends without expecting anything in return — no forgiveness, no reconciliation, no relief

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

7. I can distinguish between genuine willingness and the desire to "get this over with"

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

8. I am willing to make living amends — sustained behavior change — for harms that cannot be repaired with words alone

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

YOUR EXERCISE

The Comprehensive Amends List

All Persons You Have Harmed — By Life Area

Building Your List

Your Step Four inventory already contains the raw material for this list. This exercise organizes it by life area and ensures no one is missed. Focus on YOUR behavior, regardless of what the other person did to you.

Family Members

Person #1

Who? (Name or identifying description)

What did I do? (Specific behavior — not vague)

What harm did it cause them?

Person #2

Who? (Name or identifying description)

What did I do? (Specific behavior — not vague)

What harm did it cause them?

Person #3

Who? (Name or identifying description)

What did I do? (Specific behavior — not vague)

What harm did it cause them?

Person #4

Who? (Name or identifying description)

What did I do? (Specific behavior — not vague)

What harm did it cause them?

Romantic Partners / Ex-Partners

Person #1

Who? (Name or identifying description)

What did I do? (Specific behavior — not vague)

What harm did it cause them?

Person #2

Who? (Name or identifying description)

What did I do? (Specific behavior — not vague)

What harm did it cause them?

Person #3

Who? (Name or identifying description)

What did I do? (Specific behavior — not vague)

What harm did it cause them?

Person #4

Who? (Name or identifying description)

What did I do? (Specific behavior — not vague)

What harm did it cause them?

Friends & Recovery Community

Person #1

Who? (Name or identifying description)

What did I do? (Specific behavior — not vague)

What harm did it cause them?

Person #2

Who? (Name or identifying description)

What did I do? (Specific behavior — not vague)

What harm did it cause them?

Person #3

Who? (Name or identifying description)

What did I do? (Specific behavior — not vague)

What harm did it cause them?

Person #4

Who? (Name or identifying description)

What did I do? (Specific behavior — not vague)

What harm did it cause them?

Employers, Colleagues & Professional

Person #1

Who? (Name or identifying description)

What did I do? (Specific behavior — not vague)

What harm did it cause them?

Person #2

Who? (Name or identifying description)

What did I do? (Specific behavior — not vague)

What harm did it cause them?

Person #3

Who? (Name or identifying description)

What did I do? (Specific behavior — not vague)

What harm did it cause them?

Person #4

Who? (Name or identifying description)

What did I do? (Specific behavior — not vague)

What harm did it cause them?

Financial — People & Institutions

Person #1

Who? (Name or identifying description)

What did I do? (Specific behavior — not vague)

What harm did it cause them?

Person #2

Who? (Name or identifying description)

What did I do? (Specific behavior — not vague)

What harm did it cause them?

Person #3

Who? (Name or identifying description)

What did I do? (Specific behavior — not vague)

What harm did it cause them?

Person #4

Who? (Name or identifying description)

What did I do? (Specific behavior — not vague)

What harm did it cause them?

Community, Strangers & Institutions

Person #1

Who? (Name or identifying description)

What did I do? (Specific behavior — not vague)

What harm did it cause them?

Person #2

Who? (Name or identifying description)

What did I do? (Specific behavior — not vague)

What harm did it cause them?

Person #3

Who? (Name or identifying description)

What did I do? (Specific behavior — not vague)

What harm did it cause them?

Person #4

Who? (Name or identifying description)

What did I do? (Specific behavior — not vague)

What harm did it cause them?

Myself

List the specific ways you have harmed yourself through your addiction and character defects.

Physical harms — how did you damage your health, body, or physical wellbeing?

Emotional harms — how did you damage your self-worth, emotional health, or inner life?

Potential harms — what opportunities, dreams, or growth did you sacrifice or destroy?

Relational harms — how did your behavior damage your capacity for healthy relationships?

YOUR EXERCISE**Willingness Inventory — Name by Name**

How Willing Are You for Each Specific Amend?

Honest Willingness Check

Step Eight says "became willing to make amends to them ALL." This exercise examines your willingness person by person, revealing where you are ready and where resistance lives.

Person #1

Name (from your amends list):

What amend is owed:

Willingness level (1 = completely unwilling, 10 = ready right now)

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

If below 7: What is blocking your willingness?

Person #2

Name (from your amends list):

What amend is owed:

Willingness level (1 = completely unwilling, 10 = ready right now)

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

If below 7: What is blocking your willingness?

Person #3

Name (from your amends list):

What amend is owed:

Willingness level (1 = completely unwilling, 10 = ready right now)

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

If below 7: What is blocking your willingness?

Person #4

Name (from your amends list):

What amend is owed:

Willingness level (1 = completely unwilling, 10 = ready right now)

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

If below 7: What is blocking your willingness?

Person #5

Name (from your amends list):

What amend is owed:

Willingness level (1 = completely unwilling, 10 = ready right now)

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

If below 7: What is blocking your willingness?

Person #6

Name (from your amends list):

What amend is owed:

Willingness level (1 = completely unwilling, 10 = ready right now)

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

If below 7: What is blocking your willingness?

Person #7

Name (from your amends list):

What amend is owed:

Willingness level (1 = completely unwilling, 10 = ready right now)

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

If below 7: What is blocking your willingness?

Person #8

Name (from your amends list):

What amend is owed:

Willingness level (1 = completely unwilling, 10 = ready right now)

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

If below 7: What is blocking your willingness?

PART 2 OF 5 · READING

Step Nine: Making Direct Amends Wherever Possible

Step Nine of Narcotics Anonymous states: "We made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others." This step moves from preparation to action — from the list and the willingness of Step Eight to the actual work of approaching people, acknowledging harm, and taking concrete steps to repair what can be repaired.

The word "direct" is deliberate. Step Nine calls for face-to-face, person-to-person acknowledgment whenever possible. A direct amend is not a text message. It is not a vague reference in a Christmas card. It is the act of sitting across from another human being, looking them in the eye, and saying: "I harmed you. This is what I did. I take full responsibility. And I want to do what I can to make it right."

A complete amend has three components. The first is acknowledgment — clearly and specifically naming what you did and the harm it caused. Not "I am sorry if I ever did anything to hurt you" but "I lied to you repeatedly, I stole two hundred dollars from your wallet, and I broke my promise to attend your graduation." Specificity matters because it demonstrates that you actually understand what you did.

The second component is accountability — accepting full responsibility without qualification, justification, or excuse. Accountability also means not deflecting to what the other person did. Your amend is about YOUR behavior. If you begin your amend by saying "I know we both made mistakes," you have already diluted it.

The third component is action — what you will do differently and, where applicable, what you can do to repair the damage. If you stole money, the action is repayment. If you damaged trust, the action is consistent trustworthy behavior over time. Some harms cannot be fully repaired — but you can commit to living differently, and that commitment, demonstrated consistently over time, is itself a powerful amend.

The "except when to do so would injure them or others" clause requires careful, honest discernment. This is not a blanket escape hatch for amends that are merely uncomfortable. This clause should always be applied in consultation with your sponsor or counselor, never unilaterally, because the temptation to use it as an avoidance mechanism is powerful and often unconscious.

The timing of amends matters. Some amends should be made promptly. Other amends require careful preparation. Your sponsor can help you determine the right timing for each amend.

Reflection Questions

1. What does "direct amends" mean to you? How does the directness — face to face, specific, accountable — differ from the apologies you may have offered in the past?

2. Think of the most significant amend on your list. Can you identify all three components — acknowledgment, accountability, and action — for that specific amend?

3. How do you understand the "except when to do so would injure them or others" clause? Are you using it honestly, or are there amends you are avoiding under its protection?

4. What is the difference between an apology and an amend? Have you made apologies in the past that were not backed by changed behavior?

5. What support do you need in place before you begin making your amends? Who can help you prepare, debrief, and stay grounded through the process?

CHECK YOURSELF · CHECK-IN 3 OF 5

Resistance & Barriers

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

1. I am afraid that making certain amends will have negative consequences — legal, professional, or relational

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

2. I am reluctant to make amends to people who also harmed me because it feels unfair

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

3. I worry that approaching some people will reopen old wounds — theirs or mine
☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5
4. Part of me believes that enough time has passed and some amends are no longer necessary
☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5
5. I am tempted to make amends to easy people first and avoid the difficult ones indefinitely
☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5
6. I fear that making amends will make me look weak, foolish, or overly dramatic
☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5
7. I am using the "except when to do so would injure them or others" clause to avoid amends I should make
☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5
8. I am procrastinating on my amends list because the process feels overwhelming
☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

CHECK YOURSELF · CHECK-IN 4 OF 5**Emotional Readiness**

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

1. I am emotionally stable enough to handle the range of responses my amends may generate
☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5
2. I have processed my own feelings about the harm I caused sufficiently to approach others without emotional volatility
☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5
3. I can separate my need for the other person to respond positively from the act of making the amend
☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5
4. I have support systems in place to process my experience before, during, and after making amends
☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5
5. I am prepared for the possibility that some amends will not produce the relief or reconciliation I hope for
☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5
6. I have enough recovery time and stability to ensure my amends are genuine rather than performative
☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5
7. I can manage guilt and shame without them derailing the amends process
☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5
8. I am grounded enough in my recovery to make amends without it threatening my sobriety
☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

YOUR EXERCISE**Resistance & Fear Mapping**

What Is Preventing You From Making Your Amends?

Fear of Rejection

"They will not forgive me. They will reject me." This fear assumes the worst about the other person and keeps you frozen.

How active is this resistance? (1 = not a factor, 10 = primary barrier)

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

Which specific amends does this resistance apply to? Name the people.

What would you say to a sponsee with this exact resistance? What truth cuts through it?

Fear of Consequences

"Making this amend could result in legal trouble or professional consequences." This fear focuses on what you might lose.

How active is this resistance? (1 = not a factor, 10 = primary barrier)

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

Which specific amends does this resistance apply to? Name the people.

What would you say to a sponsee with this exact resistance? What truth cuts through it?

The Fairness Barrier

"They harmed me too — maybe worse. Why should I be the one to make amends?" This resistance disguises resentment as a sense of justice.

How active is this resistance? (1 = not a factor, 10 = primary barrier)

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

Which specific amends does this resistance apply to? Name the people.

What would you say to a sponsee with this exact resistance? What truth cuts through it?

Overwhelming Shame

"What I did is too terrible to face." Shame paralyzes by making the harm feel unsurvivable.

How active is this resistance? (1 = not a factor, 10 = primary barrier)

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

Which specific amends does this resistance apply to? Name the people.

What would you say to a sponsee with this exact resistance? What truth cuts through it?

The Passage of Time

"It has been too long. They have moved on." This resistance assumes healing has occurred without accountability.

How active is this resistance? (1 = not a factor, 10 = primary barrier)

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

Which specific amends does this resistance apply to? Name the people.

What would you say to a sponsee with this exact resistance? What truth cuts through it?

Simple Avoidance

"I will get to it eventually." This resistance procrastinates indefinitely, disguised as priorities.

How active is this resistance? (1 = not a factor, 10 = primary barrier)

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

Which specific amends does this resistance apply to? Name the people.

What would you say to a sponsee with this exact resistance? What truth cuts through it?

YOUR EXERCISE

Amends Preparation Worksheets

Planning What to Say and How to Say It

Preparation, Not Scripting

Preparing for an amend is not about memorizing a script. It is about getting clear on what you need to acknowledge, what accountability looks like, and what action you are prepared to take.

Amend Preparation #1

Who is this amend for?

ACKNOWLEDGMENT — What specifically did I do?

ACCOUNTABILITY — What harm did it cause and what is my responsibility?

ACTION — What will I do to repair or make this right?

When and where will you make this amend? What is your plan for timing and setting?

What is the worst possible response? How will you handle it? Who will support you afterward?

Amend Preparation #2

Who is this amend for?

ACKNOWLEDGMENT — What specifically did I do?

ACCOUNTABILITY — What harm did it cause and what is my responsibility?

ACTION — What will I do to repair or make this right?

When and where will you make this amend? What is your plan for timing and setting?

What is the worst possible response? How will you handle it? Who will support you afterward?

Amend Preparation #3

Who is this amend for?

ACKNOWLEDGMENT — What specifically did I do?

ACCOUNTABILITY — What harm did it cause and what is my responsibility?

ACTION — What will I do to repair or make this right?

When and where will you make this amend? What is your plan for timing and setting?

What is the worst possible response? How will you handle it? Who will support you afterward?

Amend Preparation #4

Who is this amend for?

ACKNOWLEDGMENT — What specifically did I do?

ACCOUNTABILITY — What harm did it cause and what is my responsibility?

ACTION — What will I do to repair or make this right?

When and where will you make this amend? What is your plan for timing and setting?

What is the worst possible response? How will you handle it? Who will support you afterward?

Amend Preparation #5

Who is this amend for?

ACKNOWLEDGMENT — What specifically did I do?

ACCOUNTABILITY — What harm did it cause and what is my responsibility?

ACTION — What will I do to repair or make this right?

When and where will you make this amend? What is your plan for timing and setting?

What is the worst possible response? How will you handle it? Who will support you afterward?

PART 3 OF 5 · READING

Types of Amends: Direct, Living, Indirect, and When Not to Make Them

Not all amends look the same. Understanding the different types of amends — and when each is appropriate — is essential for approaching Step Nine with both courage and wisdom. Making the wrong type of amend, or making an amend in the wrong way, can cause additional harm rather than healing.

Direct amends are the primary form called for in Step Nine. A direct amend involves going to the person you harmed, acknowledging specifically what you did, taking full responsibility, and offering concrete action to repair the damage. Most of the amends on your list will be direct amends.

Financial amends are a specific category of direct amends that involve repaying money owed — whether through theft, unpaid debts, or financial exploitation. If you stole money, the amend is to repay it. If you cannot repay the full amount immediately, the amend is to create a repayment plan and follow through consistently. Financial amends may be the most tangible demonstration that your recovery produces changed behavior, not just changed words.

Living amends are sustained changes in behavior that demonstrate your transformation over time. Living amends are appropriate when the harm you caused cannot be repaired by a single conversation or action. If you were an absent parent, the living amend is consistent, reliable presence over months and years. Living amends are not one-time events. They are the daily proof that your character has genuinely changed.

Indirect amends are appropriate when direct contact is impossible, would cause harm, or has been explicitly refused. If someone has died, you might make an indirect amend by living the values that would honor them, or by writing a letter that you read to your sponsor rather than sending. If someone has requested no contact, you honor their boundary and make your amend indirectly.

There are situations where making an amend would cause more harm than good. The purpose of amends is to repair harm, not to create new harm in pursuit of your own spiritual relief.

One critical principle: amends are not apologies. An apology says "I am sorry." An amend says "I am sorry, this is exactly what I did, I take full responsibility, and here is what I am going to do about it." An apology is a statement. An amend is a statement backed by action.

Reflection Questions

1. As you review your list, can you categorize each amend as direct, living, indirect, or not appropriate?

2. Which type of amend feels most challenging to you — direct, financial, or living? What makes that type particularly difficult?

3. Is there anyone on your list where you have determined that making a direct amend would cause harm? Have you discussed this with your sponsor?

4. What is the difference between the apologies you made in active addiction and the amends recovery is asking of you?

5. Are there living amends you are already making — sustained changes in behavior that demonstrate your transformation? Name them specifically.

CHECK YOURSELF · CHECK-IN 5 OF 5

Discernment & Judgment

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

1. I understand the difference between a direct amend, a living amend, and an indirect amend, and when each is appropriate

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

2. I have discussed my amends list and approach with my sponsor or counselor before taking action

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

3. I can distinguish between amends that would genuinely help the other person and amends that would primarily serve my ego or guilt

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

4. I understand the "except when to do so would injure them or others" principle and can apply it honestly rather than as an escape hatch

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

5. I am able to consider the other person's perspective and timing when planning amends, not just my own readiness

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

6. I understand that some amends require careful planning and cannot be made impulsively

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

7. I can differentiate between owning my part and taking responsibility for harm that is not mine

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

8. I have considered whether my amends might harm innocent third parties and have adjusted my approach accordingly

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

YOUR EXERCISE

Amends Type Classification

Direct, Living, Indirect, or Not Appropriate?

Choosing the Right Type

Each amend on your list requires a specific approach. Direct amends are face-to-face. Living amends are sustained behavior change. Indirect amends address harms where direct contact is impossible or harmful. Classify each amend with your sponsor's guidance.

Amend #1

Person / Institution:

Amend Type:

☐ Direct Amend ☐ Living Amend ☐ Indirect Amend ☐ Financial Amend ☐ Not Appropriate — Would Cause Harm

Why this type? What makes this the appropriate approach?

Have you discussed this with your sponsor? What was their input?

Amend #2

Person / Institution:

Amend Type:

☐ Direct Amend ☐ Living Amend ☐ Indirect Amend ☐ Financial Amend ☐ Not Appropriate — Would Cause Harm

Why this type? What makes this the appropriate approach?

Have you discussed this with your sponsor? What was their input?

Amend #3

Person / Institution:

Amend Type:

☐ Direct Amend ☐ Living Amend ☐ Indirect Amend ☐ Financial Amend ☐ Not Appropriate — Would Cause Harm

Why this type? What makes this the appropriate approach?

Have you discussed this with your sponsor? What was their input?

Amend #4

Person / Institution:

Amend Type:

☐ Direct Amend ☐ Living Amend ☐ Indirect Amend ☐ Financial Amend ☐ Not Appropriate — Would Cause Harm

Why this type? What makes this the appropriate approach?

Have you discussed this with your sponsor? What was their input?

Amend #5

Person / Institution:

Amend Type:

☐ Direct Amend ☐ Living Amend ☐ Indirect Amend ☐ Financial Amend ☐ Not Appropriate — Would Cause Harm

Why this type? What makes this the appropriate approach?

Have you discussed this with your sponsor? What was their input?

Amend #6

Person / Institution:

Amend Type:

☐ Direct Amend ☐ Living Amend ☐ Indirect Amend ☐ Financial Amend ☐ Not Appropriate — Would Cause Harm

Why this type? What makes this the appropriate approach?

Have you discussed this with your sponsor? What was their input?

Amend #7

Person / Institution:

Amend Type:

☐ Direct Amend ☐ Living Amend ☐ Indirect Amend ☐ Financial Amend ☐ Not Appropriate — Would Cause Harm

Why this type? What makes this the appropriate approach?

Have you discussed this with your sponsor? What was their input?

Amend #8

Person / Institution:

Amend Type:

☐ Direct Amend ☐ Living Amend ☐ Indirect Amend ☐ Financial Amend ☐ Not Appropriate — Would Cause Harm

Why this type? What makes this the appropriate approach?

Have you discussed this with your sponsor? What was their input?

YOUR EXERCISE

Financial Amends Planner

Creating a Realistic Plan for Financial Restitution

Why Financial Amends Matter

Financial amends are among the most tangible demonstrations that your recovery produces real change. Repaying debts — even slowly — demonstrates integrity in action.

Financial Amend #1

Who do I owe? (Person or institution)

What was the financial harm? (Theft, unpaid debt, financial exploitation, etc.)

Estimated amount owed:

Repayment plan: How will you repay this? Monthly amount? Timeline?

Will the repayment be direct (to the person) or indirect (to a charity, if person cannot be reached)?

Financial Amend #2

Who do I owe? (Person or institution)

What was the financial harm? (Theft, unpaid debt, financial exploitation, etc.)

Estimated amount owed:

Repayment plan: How will you repay this? Monthly amount? Timeline?

Will the repayment be direct (to the person) or indirect (to a charity, if person cannot be reached)?

Financial Amend #3

Who do I owe? (Person or institution)

What was the financial harm? (Theft, unpaid debt, financial exploitation, etc.)

Estimated amount owed:

Repayment plan: How will you repay this? Monthly amount? Timeline?

Will the repayment be direct (to the person) or indirect (to a charity, if person cannot be reached)?

Financial Amend #4

Who do I owe? (Person or institution)

What was the financial harm? (Theft, unpaid debt, financial exploitation, etc.)

Estimated amount owed:

Repayment plan: How will you repay this? Monthly amount? Timeline?

Will the repayment be direct (to the person) or indirect (to a charity, if person cannot be reached)?

Financial Amend #5

Who do I owe? (Person or institution)

What was the financial harm? (Theft, unpaid debt, financial exploitation, etc.)

Estimated amount owed:

Repayment plan: How will you repay this? Monthly amount? Timeline?

Will the repayment be direct (to the person) or indirect (to a charity, if person cannot be reached)?

Financial Amend #6

Who do I owe? (Person or institution)

What was the financial harm? (Theft, unpaid debt, financial exploitation, etc.)

Estimated amount owed:

Repayment plan: How will you repay this? Monthly amount? Timeline?

Will the repayment be direct (to the person) or indirect (to a charity, if person cannot be reached)?

YOUR EXERCISE

Living Amends Commitment

Sustained Changed Behavior as Ongoing Repair

What Is a Living Amend?

A living amend is the daily demonstration of changed behavior in areas where a single conversation or payment cannot repair the damage. Living amends are proven over months and years, not declared in moments.

As a Parent / Caregiver

If you harmed your children through neglect, absence, or dysfunction, what does your living amend look like?

My specific commitments (concrete, measurable behaviors):

How will you hold yourself accountable? Who will know about your commitment?

As a Partner / Spouse

If you damaged your most intimate relationship through dishonesty, emotional absence, or betrayal, what does your living amend look like?

My specific commitments (concrete, measurable behaviors):

How will you hold yourself accountable? Who will know about your commitment?

As a Family Member**As a Friend**

If you exploited, neglected, or betrayed friendships, how will you show up differently in your friendships now?

My specific commitments (concrete, measurable behaviors):

How will you hold yourself accountable? Who will know about your commitment?

As a Member of Society

If you harmed your community, what does your living amend as a community member look like?

My specific commitments (concrete, measurable behaviors):

How will you hold yourself accountable? Who will know about your commitment?

As Myself

What does your daily living amend to yourself look like? How do you demonstrate every day that you value your own life and recovery?

My specific commitments (concrete, measurable behaviors):

How will you hold yourself accountable? Who will know about your commitment?

PART 4 OF 5 · READING

Amends to Self: The Most Overlooked Step Nine Work

Of all the amends on your list, the one most frequently minimized, delayed, or skipped entirely is the amend to yourself. This is paradoxical because you are, in many cases, the person you have harmed most severely and most consistently.

Your addiction did not happen to you in a vacuum. It happened through you — through decisions, however compromised, that damaged your body, your mind, your relationships, your potential, your self-respect, and your connection to the values you once held. Making amends to yourself is not narcissistic or self-indulgent. It is the honest acknowledgment that you participated in your own destruction and the concrete commitment to participate in your own restoration.

Just as a direct amend to another person includes acknowledgment, accountability, and action, the amend to yourself requires the same three components. The acknowledgment means looking honestly at what you did to yourself: you poisoned your body with substances, you sabotaged relationships that mattered to you, you abandoned your own dreams and potential. These are real harms.

The accountability component means accepting that you played an active role in these harms. This is not about blame — the disease of addiction is a powerful force — but accountability in recovery means acknowledging that you are responsible for your recovery now. Taking responsibility for the harm you caused yourself is empowerment: "If I had the power to participate in my destruction, I also have the power to participate in my restoration."

The action component — the actual amend — is the commitment to treat yourself with the care, respect, and integrity that you deserve. This is a living amend, sustained over time, that includes concrete practices: taking care of your physical health, pursuing your potential, maintaining honest relationships, setting boundaries that protect your wellbeing.

The amend to yourself also includes the commitment to stop the internal violence of relentless self-criticism and shame spirals. Many people in recovery have an inner voice that is far crueler than anything they would say to another person. The amend to yourself includes choosing to speak to yourself with the same compassion you would offer a friend in recovery.

The amend to yourself is ongoing. It is not a single conversation or a one-time act. It is the daily decision to live as though your life matters — because it does.

Reflection Questions

1. What specific harms have you done to yourself through your addiction and your character defects? Name them with the same specificity you would use for amends to another person.

2. How do you currently treat yourself — your body, your mind, your potential, your self-talk? Is your current treatment consistent with someone making amends to themselves?

3. What would a comprehensive amend to yourself look like? What would you need to acknowledge, take accountability for, and commit to doing differently?

4. How does your inner voice speak to you? Is it compassionate or cruel? Can you recognize that cruelty as a pattern that needs to change?

5. What is one concrete thing you can do this week as an amend to yourself — something that demonstrates you believe your life and wellbeing matter?

YOUR EXERCISE

Amends to Self

Acknowledging, Owning, and Healing the Harm Done to Yourself

Acknowledgment: The Harm I Did to Myself

1. Physical Health: How did I harm my body through substance use, neglect, dangerous behavior, or self-destructive choices?

2. Mental & Emotional Health: How did I damage my self-worth, my emotional wellbeing, my capacity for joy, and my mental health?

3. Relationships: How did I sabotage, destroy, or undermine relationships that mattered to me? How did I isolate myself?

4. Potential & Purpose: What dreams, goals, education, career growth, or life experiences did I sacrifice or destroy through my addiction?

5. Values & Integrity: How did I betray my own values — the things I knew were right — because the addiction demanded it?

6. Time & Life: How many years, seasons, milestones, and irreplaceable moments did I lose to active addiction?

The Living Amend: Commitments to Myself

Your Amend in Action

The amend to yourself is a living amend — a sustained commitment to treat yourself with the care and respect you deserve. For each area of harm, write a specific, concrete commitment to changed behavior.

1. Physical: What specific commitments am I making to care for my body? (Health, nutrition, exercise, medical care, sleep)

2. Emotional: How will I treat myself emotionally? What changes will I make in my self-talk and my self-compassion?

3. Relational: How will I show up differently in relationships? What patterns will I change?

4. Growth: What will I do to pursue my potential that I abandoned during active addiction?

5. Recovery: What daily practices will I maintain as evidence that I value my own life and recovery?

6. Write a letter of amends to yourself — acknowledge what you did, take responsibility, and state your commitment to living differently.

PART 5 OF 5 · READING

The Promises: What Happens When Amends Are Made

The recovery literature contains a remarkable set of promises associated with the completion of Step Nine — often simply called "The Promises." These are not guarantees, and they do not arrive on a schedule. But they represent the experience of countless people who have walked this path before you.

The first cluster of promises relates to internal freedom. People who complete their amends consistently report a fundamental shift in how they experience themselves. The chronic guilt that had been a constant companion begins to lift. The shame that said "I am a bad person" is replaced by the clarity of knowing: "I was a person who did harmful things, I have acknowledged them, I have taken responsibility, and I am living differently." The weight you have been carrying — the knowledge of unaddressed harm, the avoidance of people you have hurt — begins to dissolve as each amend is completed.

The second cluster relates to relational transformation. When you approach someone you have harmed and make a genuine, accountable, action-backed amend, the relationship changes — even if the other person does not forgive you. Many people report that their most feared amends produced the most healing — that the person they were terrified to face responded with compassion, gratitude, and sometimes tears of relief that the truth was finally being spoken.

Not all amends go well. Some people will not forgive you. Some will be angry. Some will dismiss your effort. This is their right, and it does not diminish the value of your amend. The purpose of the amend is not to control the other person's response. It is to clean your side of the street, to live in integrity, and to free yourself from the burden of unacknowledged harm. Whether they forgive you is their business. Whether you make the amend is yours.

The third cluster of promises relates to your position in the world. People who complete their amends describe a new sense of belonging — of having earned their place rather than hiding in it. The completion of your amends does not just heal your past — it transforms your present. The skills you develop through the amends process — honesty, accountability, the ability to acknowledge harm, the willingness to take action — become permanent features of how you live.

The Promises are not magical thinking. They are the natural consequence of living with courage, integrity, and accountability. They always come to those who do the work.

Reflection Questions

1. Which of the Promises most resonates with you? Which one do you most want to experience? What does that tell you about what you are currently carrying?

2. Have you already experienced any of these shifts — even in small ways — through the recovery work you have done so far?

3. How do you prepare yourself for the possibility that some amends will not be received well?

4. The Promises say that the amends process transforms your present, not just your past. How do you imagine your daily life changing as you complete your amends?

5. Write a vision statement for your life after amends — a realistic picture of what becomes possible when you have cleaned your side of the street.

YOUR EXERCISE

Amends Progress Tracker

Documenting Your Amends Journey

Record and Process

After each amend you make, use this tracker to document what happened, how it felt, and what you learned. Complete each entry as soon as possible after making the amend.

Completed Amend #1

Who did you make the amend to? Date:

What did you say? How did you make the amend? (Acknowledgment, accountability, action)

How did the other person respond?

What did you feel before, during, and after the amend?

What did you learn from this amend?

Amend quality rating (1 = vague and incomplete, 10 = thorough, honest, and action-backed)

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

Completed Amend #2

Who did you make the amend to? Date:

What did you say? How did you make the amend? (Acknowledgment, accountability, action)

How did the other person respond?

What did you feel before, during, and after the amend?

What did you learn from this amend?

Amend quality rating (1 = vague and incomplete, 10 = thorough, honest, and action-backed)

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

Completed Amend #3

Who did you make the amend to? Date:

What did you say? How did you make the amend? (Acknowledgment, accountability, action)

How did the other person respond?

What did you feel before, during, and after the amend?

What did you learn from this amend?

Amend quality rating (1 = vague and incomplete, 10 = thorough, honest, and action-backed)

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

Completed Amend #4

Who did you make the amend to? Date:

What did you say? How did you make the amend? (Acknowledgment, accountability, action)

How did the other person respond?

What did you feel before, during, and after the amend?

What did you learn from this amend?

Amend quality rating (1 = vague and incomplete, 10 = thorough, honest, and action-backed)

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

Completed Amend #5

Who did you make the amend to? Date:

What did you say? How did you make the amend? (Acknowledgment, accountability, action)

How did the other person respond?

What did you feel before, during, and after the amend?

What did you learn from this amend?

Amend quality rating (1 = vague and incomplete, 10 = thorough, honest, and action-backed)

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

Completed Amend #6

Who did you make the amend to? Date:

What did you say? How did you make the amend? (Acknowledgment, accountability, action)

How did the other person respond?

What did you feel before, during, and after the amend?

What did you learn from this amend?

Amend quality rating (1 = vague and incomplete, 10 = thorough, honest, and action-backed)

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

YOUR EXERCISE

Integration — The Promises & Living Free

From Amends to a New Way of Living

The Ongoing Practice

Steps Eight and Nine establish a way of living — one of integrity, accountability, and willingness to repair harm as it occurs. The skills you develop through this process become permanent features of your recovery.

The Promises — Your Experience

As you complete your amends, you may begin to experience what recovery literature calls "The Promises." For each, assess whether you are beginning to see it in your life:

A new freedom and a new happiness

☐ Not Yet ☐ Beginning ☐ Growing ☐ Present

Not regretting the past nor wishing to shut the door on it

☐ Not Yet ☐ Beginning ☐ Growing ☐ Present

Comprehending the word serenity and knowing peace

☐ Not Yet ☐ Beginning ☐ Growing ☐ Present

Seeing how your experience can benefit others

☐ Not Yet ☐ Beginning ☐ Growing ☐ Present

Loss of self-pity and gain of interest in others

☐ Not Yet ☐ Beginning ☐ Growing ☐ Present

Loss of selfish motives and fear of people

☐ Not Yet ☐ Beginning ☐ Growing ☐ Present

Final Integration: Your Steps Eight & Nine Summary

1. In three sentences, summarize what the amends process has taught you about accountability, courage, and the possibility of repair.

2. What was the single most significant amend you have made so far? What happened, and how did it change you?

3. Which amends remain on your list? What is your plan and timeline for completing them?

4. How has making amends changed your relationships? Your self-respect? Your sense of belonging in the world?

5. Write a letter to the person you were before you began this work — carrying unaddressed harm, avoiding the people you had hurt. What do you want them to know about the freedom on the other side?

6. The amends process teaches that the past cannot be erased but it can be redeemed. How do you understand the difference between erasing your past and redeeming it?
