

## Step Nine Overview

### Three Things to Keep in Mind as We Approach Amends

1. **Amends are for us, NOT for the other person.**

From p. 77 of the AA Big Book: "Our real purpose is to fit ourselves to be of maximum service to God and the people about us."

2. **We must be willing to accept the appropriate consequences of our actions.**

From the AA Big Book, p. 79: "...we ask that we be given strength and direction to do the right thing, no matter what the personal consequences may be. We may lose our position or reputation or face jail, but we are willing." The point is that the natural consequences of our actions are not generally a good excuse for skipping an amends due to "harm to ourselves." While not stated directly, there is an implicit emphasis on accepting the consequences of our actions that caused harm to another rather than accepting any harm the other person chooses to do to us in retaliation. We accept consequences but need not subject ourselves to additional punishment or abuse. Consult your sponsor, co-sponsor, or another trusted COSA to help clarify your situation.

3. **Amends are an ongoing process!!**

Any individual amends is NOT an isolated incident that we check off our list. We are committing to (imperfectly) *attempt* to change our course so that this type of thing will not occur again.

### Types of Amends

There are two types of amends: direct and living.

1. **DIRECT AMENDS:**

- a. Communicate directly to a person or institution. We make every effort to make amends face-to-face whenever possible. This may be an in-person meeting, a letter, an email, a phone call, or some other form of direct communication.
- b. "The word 'direct' taught us that honesty and candor were necessary in working Step Nine. Many of us realized, with alarm, that our habit of beating around the bush was not appropriate here. We understood that an e-mail would not do when a face-to-face amends was possible." *COSA Step Nine: Working the COSA Ninth Step.*

2. **LIVING AMENDS:**

- a. Living amends are made when direct amends are not possible (e.g., someone is dead or can't be tracked down) or are not advisable (i.e., when contacting them or making amends would do harm).
- b. Living amends may take many creative forms: a donation to charity, a commitment to volunteer work, a letter read aloud and burned, or a prayer.
- c. Living amends indicate a change in behavior toward others.

## Step Nine: Amends Homework<sup>1</sup>

- Review COSA Step Eight Table. See Step Study→Step Eight→Step Eight Worksheets→ COSA Step Eight Table pages 3–4 on the [COSA Zoom Room](#) website.
  1. On page two, fill in the immediate amends that need to be made and the specific action you are prepared to take.
  2. Questions to ask yourself as you look over the worksheet.
    - a. Will these amends cause harm?
    - b. Should I make direct amends or living amends?
    - c. How do I plan to make amends?
- Reminders
  1. Remember that making people (ourselves or others) uncomfortable is generally not considered harmful.
  2. It is also useful to remember that we are focused primarily on the harm we have caused to *others*; the natural consequences of our actions are not generally a good excuse for skipping amends due to “harm to ourselves.” (However, we should never put ourselves in genuinely dangerous situations or put ourselves at risk by attempting to make direct amends to someone with the potential for violence.)
  3. It can be helpful to review each item on our list with a sponsor, co-sponsor, or another trusted COSA to ensure we are being honest with ourselves about the potential for harm to ourselves and others.
- Using the tips we provided, try your hand at drafting the words you would like to say when making amends to someone on your list. It should be someone (not yourself) that you:
  1. have actually harmed and do owe amends to,
  2. are ready and willing to make amends to
  3. are able to make direct amends to (i.e., someone you are able to contact and a situation where you are fairly certain amends would not cause harm.)
- In addition, here are some helpful reminders from the AA Big Book:
  1. Need a sincere desire to set right the wrong
  2. Go in a helpful and forgiving spirit
  3. Confess our former ill feelings
  4. Express regret
  5. DO NOT criticize or argue
  6. We are to sweep off our side of the street
  7. Never tell the other what to do
  8. The other person's faults are not discussed
  9. Ask God for strength & direction to do the right thing, regardless of the consequences to us
  10. Do not sacrifice others to save yourself
  11. Before taking drastic action that might implicate others, we secure their consent
  12. Consult with others, e.g., sponsor

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<sup>1</sup> South Bay Step Group by Amy MJ and Brian T

13. Focus on self, not involving/exposing others
14. Do not criticize the other [so important it is noted twice!]
15. Ask God to show us the way of patience, compassion, tolerance, kindness, and love
16. Send a letter or email to those we can't see
17. Be sensible, tactful, considerate, and humble without being servile or scraping

If you have questions or get stuck, please reach out to your sponsor, co-sponsor, or another trusted COSA.

## The Promises Worksheet

COSA Steps	AA Promises	Personal
1. We admitted we were powerless over compulsive sexual behavior — that our lives had become unmanageable.	1: We are going to know a new freedom and a new happiness.	
2. Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.	2: We will not regret the past nor wish to shut the door on it.	
3. Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood God.	3: We will comprehend the word serenity.	
4. Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.	4: We will know peace.	
5. Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.	5: No matter how far down the scale we have gone, we will see how our experience can benefit others.	
6. Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.	6: The feeling of uselessness and self-pity will disappear.	
7. Humbly asked God to remove our shortcomings.	7: We will lose interest in selfish things and gain interest in our fellows.	

COSA Steps	AA Promises	Personal
8. Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.	8: Self-seeking will slip away.	
9. Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.	9: Our whole attitude and outlook upon life will change.	
10. Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.	10: Fear of people and economic insecurity will leave us.	
11. Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God, as we understood God, praying only for knowledge of God's will for us and the power to carry that out.	11: We will intuitively know how to handle situations which used to baffle us.	
12. Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these Steps, we tried to carry this message to others, and to practice these principles in all areas of our lives.	12: We will suddenly realize that God is doing for us what we could not do for ourselves.	

## Step Nine Amends to Yourself<sup>2</sup>

This week, you will focus on your amends.

If you have not already come to know what your amends to yourself will be, spend time praying and meditating on it each day.

Write out the answers to the following questions:

1. What amends will you make to yourself?
2. Do you feel ready to make amends to yourself? If not, what is blocking you?
3. Do you believe you are deserving of amends? If you don't, where did that message or belief come from? Is it still true for you?
4. What kinds of amends do you think are appropriate to offer yourself? If you have difficulty answering this question, imagine another person you care about who might have been hurt in similar ways. What kinds of amends would you want that person to receive? What healing would you wish for them?

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<sup>2</sup> Walk in the Light Step Study