

Step Eight - "The Amends List & Willingness"

Your Sponsor's Companion Packet

1 Sponsor's Friendly Introduction

You have done the profound spiritual work of Steps Six and Seven—becoming ready for and humbly asking for your shortcomings to be removed. Now, we take that new spiritual footing and prepare to re-enter the world in a new way.

Step Eight is the preparation for "cleaning up the wreckage of our past." It is a two-part step:

1. **Making a List:** We review our Step Four inventory and formally list all the persons we have harmed.
2. **Becoming Willing:** We look at that list and become *willing* to make amends to them all, regardless of what they did to us.

This step is about preparation, not action. The action comes in Step Nine.

2 Core Concept - The List and the Willingness

"Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all."

The Big Book (4th ed.) instruction for this step is simple and is found right after the Step Seven prayer.

| Section | Pages | What It Highlights |
|--------------------------|-----------|--|
| "Into Action" (Primary) | p. 76 | This is the core instruction. It explains that our list of people we harmed <i>already</i> exists from our Step Four inventory (Resentments, Col. 1; Sex Conduct). |
| 12x12 - Step Eight Essay | pp. 77-82 | This essay is an excellent deep dive into what "harm" means and how to cultivate the "willingness" to face it. |

3 What to Do This Week

| Action | How to Do It | Approx. Time |
|--|--|--------------|
| Re-read the Big Book Instruction (p. 76). | Read the paragraphs on Step Eight. The Big Book says, "We have a list... We made it when we took inventory." | 10 min |
| Review Your Step Four Inventory. | This is essential. Pull out your Step Four worksheet. Your list of people will come <i>directly</i> from your Resentment list (Column 1) and your Sex Conduct inventory. | 30 min |
| Create Your Amends List. | (See box below). On a <i>new</i> sheet of paper, formally write the name of every person, group, or institution you harmed. | 30-45 min |
| Cultivate Willingness. | Go down the list, one name at a time. Ask your Higher Power for the <i>willingness</i> to make amends, especially for the names that cause fear or anger. | 15 min |
| Read the 12x12 Step-Eight Essay. | This will help you understand the different types of harm (material, emotional, spiritual) and how to approach "willingness." | 20 min |
| Discuss Your List With Your Sponsor. | Before moving to Step Nine, you <i>must</i> review this list with your sponsor. This | 30-60 min |

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| | is a crucial check-in. | |
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My Amends List (from Step 4 Inventory)

Instructions: Review your Step 4 Resentment and Sex Conduct worksheets. List every person, institution, or group you harmed. This is just a list; we will plan the action in Step Nine.

| Person / Institution Harmed | What Was My Part? (Briefly, from Step 4) |
|---|--|
| <i>Example: My Mother</i> | <i>Lied about drinking, stole money, caused worry.</i> |
| <i>Example: My Old Boss (Mr. Jones)</i> | <i>Missed work, irresponsible, damaged company reputation.</i> |
| <i>Example: My Ex-Partner</i> | <i>Dishonesty, jealousy, self-centeredness.</i> |
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4 Tradition Eight - "Alcoholics Anonymous should remain forever nonprofessional, but our service centers may employ special workers."

This tradition of non-professionalism is key to Step Eight. When we prepare to make amends, we are not preparing to be *therapists, counselors, or professional mediators* ("special workers").

Our job is to clean up *our side of the street*—personally, humbly, and "non-professionally." We are not there to analyze the other person's faults or to offer them professional advice. We are simply there as one human being who has caused harm and is now *willing* to admit it and make it right. This "nonprofessional," humble attitude is the very essence of a good amend.

5 Handling Difficult Situations (The "Willingness" Blockers)

This step is about *becoming willing*, which can be hard. Here are common roadblocks:

| Situation | Why It's Tricky | Recommended Action (for Willingness) |
|--------------------------------|---|--|
| "But <i>They</i> Harmed Me!" | Our pride and ego are blocking us from seeing our part. | This is the most common blocker. Focus <i>only</i> on your part. Ask, "Where was I selfish, dishonest, or afraid?" |
| Person is Deceased | No direct contact is possible. | You can still become willing. The amend will be indirect (e.g., a letter you don't send, a service in their name). Put them on the list. |
| Person is Abusive / Unsafe | Direct contact could cause more harm to you or them. | This is what "became willing" is for. You become willing, and then with your sponsor, you will plan a <i>safe, indirect</i> amend for Step Nine. |
| I'm Still Too Scared / Ashamed | The fear of their reaction is paralyzing. | This is normal. Take this fear to your Higher Power. Ask for the <i>willingness to be willing</i> . That is often enough to start. |

6 Reflection & Integration (Your Personal Worksheet)

1. **List Created?** Have you reviewed your Step Four and written your new, clean Step Eight list? [Yes] [Not Yet]
2. **Most Difficult Name:** Write the name on your list that brings up the most fear or resentment.
3. **Willingness Check:** Say this aloud: "I am willing to make amends to [Name from #2], *if only for the sake of my own sobriety and spiritual growth.*" How did that feel?
4. **Sponsor Check-In:** Have you scheduled a time to review your list with your sponsor? [Yes] [Not Yet]
5. **Journal Prompt:** What is the difference between "making an amend" and "apologizing"? Why is "willingness" the key?

7 Suggested Follow-Up Reading

| Source | Pages / Sections | What to Highlight |
|------------------------------------|------------------|--|
| Big Book - "Into Action" (Primary) | p. 76 | The sentences connecting our inventory to this list. |
| Big Book - "Into Action" | pp. 76-84 | Read this whole section. It covers Steps 8, 9, 10, and 11. It's the "how-to" guide for long-term recovery. |
| 12x12 - Step Eight Essay | pp. 77-82 | The discussion of "harm" and the "deep significance" of this step. |
| 12x12 - Tradition Eight Essay | pp. 168-173 | The importance of our "nonprofessional" status in all our A.A. work. |

8 Moving Toward Step Nine

You have your list. You have practiced becoming willing. You have reviewed the list with your sponsor. You are now perfectly prepared for the action step that follows.

Step Eight is the preparation. Step Nine is the action: **"Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others."**

9 Quick-Help FAQ

| Question | Short Answer |
|---|---|
| What if I can't locate a person? | Put them on the list anyway. Become willing. The <i>effort</i> to find them is often part of the amend. Discuss the "unable to locate" cases with your sponsor. |
| Do I have to include people I harmed <i>before</i> I drank? | The instruction is "all persons we had harmed." This is a program for living, not just for drinking. Yes, list them. |
| What if I'm not willing to make amends to someone? | This is the <i>most important</i> part of Step Eight. Be honest about it. Put them on the list, and next to their name, write "Not |

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| | willing." Then, pray <i>only</i> for the willingness. That's the entire step. |
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10 Final Encouragement

This step takes courage. Making the list and facing it squarely is a huge accomplishment. You are looking at your past without blinking, perhaps for the first time. This "fact-facing" is the key to freedom.

Remember: You don't have to *want* to do this. You just have to *become willing* to do it for your own recovery. Trust that your Higher Power, who has brought you this far, will give you the willingness if you ask for it.

-Your Sponsor