

Step Nine - "Making Direct Amends"

Your Sponsor's Companion Packet

1 Sponsor's Warm Opening

You have your list. You have become willing. Step Nine is the action. This is the step that "separates the men from the boys" (and the women from the girls), and it's the one that delivers the most immediate freedom.

This is the "deep" work you've been preparing for. We are now going to take our list from Step Eight and, with courage and care, "make direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others."

Think of this as walking back to every place you left a mess and cleaning it up. It's not about groveling; it's about taking responsibility. You are not alone in this—your sponsor and your Higher Power will be with you.

2 Core Concept - The Action of Amends

"Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others."

The Big Book (4th ed.) instruction for this step is detailed, practical, and full of wisdom.

Section	Pages	What It Highlights
"Into Action" (Primary)	pp. 76-84	This is the <i>entire</i> instruction for Step Nine. It gives clear examples, the critical "except when..." clause, and the promises.
12x12 - Step Nine Essay	pp. 83-92	This essay is an excellent deep dive into the <i>spirit</i> of the amend: courage, prudence, and the right timing.

3 What to Do This Week

Action	How to Do It	Approx. Time

FINAL Sponsor Review.	Do not proceed without this. Review your Step Eight list <i>one last time</i> with your sponsor to plan the "who, what, and when."	60 min
Re-read the Big Book (pp. 76-84).	Read this section slowly. This is your "how-to" manual. Highlight the "exceptions" and the different approaches.	30 min
Plan Your Amends Script.	(See box below). For each person, plan <i>exactly</i> what you will say. Keep it short, to the point, and focused on <i>your</i> part.	15 min
Make Your First (Safe) Amends.	Start with one or two people from your list that you and your sponsor agree are "safe" (e.g., not a complex emotional or financial amend).	Varies
Report Back to Your Sponsor.	After each amend, call your sponsor. Talk about how it went, how you feel, and what you learned. This is crucial.	10 min per call
Read the 12x12 Step-Nine Essay.	This will give you the spiritual courage and prudence needed for the more difficult amends.	20 min

How to Plan an Amend (The "Script")

Your sponsor will guide you, but a good amend is simple and has four parts:

1. **The Admission:** "I came here today to tell you I was wrong and to make an amend."
2. **State Your Wrongs (Specifically):** "I was dishonest with you about my drinking. I was selfish with our money. I was afraid and acted badly." (Use *your* inventory. No "ifs" or "buts".)

3. **The Apology:** "I am truly sorry for the harm I caused you."
4. **The Offer:** "What can I do to make this right?" (Be prepared to do it if it's reasonable. If they ask for nothing, your living sober is the amend.)

CRITICAL: After you speak, **STOP. TALKING.** Do not explain, justify, or defend. Do not say, "I'm sorry, *but* you were..." Just listen.

4 Tradition Nine - "A.A., as such, ought never be organized; but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve."

This seems like a strange fit, but it's perfect. This tradition means A.A. is a *spiritual fellowship*, not an "organization" with rules and bosses.

Your amends must be the same. You cannot "organize" an amend by just sending a check in the mail (a "committee" solution) or having someone else do it for you. A true amend is a *personal, spiritual, "disorganized" action*. It must be a direct, heart-to-heart connection, responsible *only* to the person you harmed and your Higher Power.

5 Handling Difficult Situations (The "Exceptions Clause")

"...except when to do so would injure them or others."

This is the most important part of Step Nine. You must discuss these with your sponsor.

Situation	Why It's Tricky	Recommended Action (Discuss with Sponsor)
Amends would "injure others"	<i>Example:</i> Admitting an affair would deeply harm your current, innocent partner.	This is the classic "exception." You <i>do not</i> make this amend. Your living amends (sobriety, honesty <i>now</i>) is the path.
Amends would "injure them"	<i>Example:</i> Contacting an ex-partner who has a restraining order or has clearly moved on and would be re-traumatized by your call.	This is an <i>indirect</i> amend. You and your sponsor may decide on a living amends or a letter you write but <i>never send</i> .
Person is Deceased	Direct amends is impossible.	This is a spiritual amend. You can write a letter and read it at their gravesite, or "in spirit." You can do a

		service in their name.
They Won't Forgive You	The person is still angry, hostile, or rejects your amend.	Your job is to <i>make</i> the amend, not to <i>be forgiven</i> . You've cleaned your side of the street. Humbly accept their reaction and move on.
Financial Amends	You owe money you don't have.	"We will be amazed before we are halfway through." Be honest. Say, "I owe you \$1,000. I can't pay it today, but I <i>can</i> pay you \$20 a week." <i>Then do it.</i>

6 Reflection & Integration (Your Personal Worksheet)

- Amends Log:** After each amend, write it down.
 - **Person:**
 - **How I Made It (Phone, In-Person):**
 - **How I Felt Before:**
 - **How I Feel After:**
- The "Exception" List:** List any amends your sponsor advised you to make *indirectly* or *not at all*.
- The Promises:** Read the "Promises" (Big Book, pp. 83-84). Which ones are you starting to see in your life?
- Journal Prompt:** What is the difference between "apologizing" and "making an amend"?

7 Suggested Follow-Up Reading

Source	Pages / Sections	What to Highlight
Big Book - "Into Action" (Primary)	pp. 76-84	ALL OF IT. Especially the "exceptions" (p. 80) and The Promises (pp. 83-84).
12x12 - Step Nine Essay	pp. 83-92	The discussion of "timing" and "prudence."
12x12 - Tradition Nine Essay	pp. 174-179	The concept of "service" being our guide, not

		"organization."
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8 Moving Toward Step Ten

As you clean up the wreckage of the past (Step Nine), you will feel an incredible sense of freedom. The purpose of the *next* step is to *keep* that freedom.

Step Ten, "**Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it,**" is the daily practice that prevents us from creating *new* wreckage, so we never have to do a massive "Step Nine" like this again.

9 Quick-Help FAQ

Question	Short Answer
What if they don't accept my apology?	Your job is to deliver the message, not to control how it's received. You have done your part. You are free.
What if they yell at me?	Let them. Do not defend yourself. Just sit, listen, and when they are done, say, "You're right. I am truly sorry for that."
What if I can't find someone?	You make a <i>diligent</i> effort. If you truly cannot find them, you and your sponsor can decide on an indirect amend. The <i>willingness</i> is what matters.
Do I have to do this in person?	In-person is almost always best. A phone call is second best. A letter can be a good option in specific cases. A text or email is almost never appropriate.

10 Final Encouragement

This step is the key to the promises. It will take all the courage and humility you have built through the first eight steps. You will be scared. Do it anyway.

Walk through the fear. With every single amend you make, you are dismantling the prison of your past, one bar at a time. The freedom on the other side is beyond description. We will be amazed before we are halfway through.

-Your Sponsor