

## Step Eleven

***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.***

*Faith and humility converge in Step Eleven as our relationship with God deepens and strengthens. We work to improve our conscious contact with our Higher Power through prayer and meditation, as we seek our Higher Power's will for us. Practicing Step Eleven is a continual process that requires commitment, practice, and patience. We open ourselves to profound spiritual growth as we work this Step.*

### Approaching Step Eleven

As we reflected back on the prior ten Steps, many of us recognized that a Higher Power had been with us. In Step Two, a Power greater than ourselves became a tangible concept. Our trust in that Power grew as we worked Step Three and decided to turn our wills and our lives over to God's care. Based on the foundation of Steps Two and Three, many of us sensed that our Higher Power was by our side, and we moved trustingly forward through the next Steps. With our Higher Power's guidance, and that of our sponsors, co-sponsors, Step study groups, and wise COSA friends, we continued to grow in recovery. Little by little, as we put our trust in our Higher Power, many of us witnessed miracles that helped our faith blossom.

The words of Step Three were echoed in Step Eleven: "God as we understood God." Steps Two and Three invited us to come to know and trust in a Higher Power of our own understanding. Step Eleven offered us the opportunity to revisit our perception of our Higher Power and deepen our connection. Some of us held tightly to our initial understanding of a Higher Power, while others noticed that the concept of a Higher Power changed and evolved as we worked the Steps and became more aware of the spiritual gifts we had received. However we approached it, Step Eleven gave us the spiritual freedom to follow our hearts and our intuitive wisdom as we determined what worked for us individually.

### Improving Our Conscious Contact

In Step Eleven, we opened ourselves to connecting with our Higher Power through prayer and meditation. Some of us saw prayer and meditation as a single action; others saw them as two separate exercises. Many conceptualized prayer as talking to God and meditation as listening to God.

Determining how to pray was a very personal choice for each of us, and the way we approached prayer may have unfolded over time. For some of us, our religious practices and places of worship were a haven where we could sing or chant our prayers together in community. Others were uncomfortable with or never identified with formalized religious

practices. We may have experienced religious or spiritual traumas or received shaming messages from religious institutions and even our families of origin about “God” and our place in the universe. Our sponsors were there to remind us that COSA is not a religious program but a spiritual one and that we had the freedom to develop our own individual spirituality.

We may have searched for new practices of our own, expressing ourselves very personally to our Higher Power. Some of us experienced spiritual connection through journaling, reading, spending time in nature, or finding a sense of true belonging in our COSA groups. We may have read or recited prayers that touched us. Or we prayed wordlessly, connecting to our Higher Power through our innermost thoughts and feelings.

As with prayer, we also found that there was no right or wrong way to meditate. Some of us carved out tranquil time to sit in stillness and listen. Letting go of outside distractions, we looked deep inside ourselves and quieted our thoughts. Focusing on our breath, we may have achieved a state of quiet calmness within which we strengthened our connection with our Higher Power.

If one meditation practice did not work for us, we tried another way, maybe several, until we found something that allowed us to comfortably clear our minds and calm our hearts. Some of us meditated by holding a sacred object, lighting a candle, or listening to music. Concentrating on the experience, strength, and hope being shared in the serenity of a COSA room or spending time in contemplative reading or writing were other choices. We may have experimented with active forms of meditation such as walking in nature, practicing yoga, running, or even connecting with our pets. The options were endless. Most of us found that our preferred methods ebbed, flowed, and changed as we grew in recovery.

### **Seeking God’s Will**

While Step Eleven gave us room to decide how to pray and meditate, this Step advised us to pray only for knowledge of God’s will for us and for the power to carry that out. We had to practice letting go of our self-will and asking instead for the courage and wisdom to know and carry out God’s intention. Some of us asked for clarity in distinguishing God’s will from our own will. While sometimes God’s will was immediately clear to us, at other times we needed to wait patiently to receive the message.

In the past we might have been tempted, when praying, to ask for specific solutions to specific problems. We may have asked our Higher Power to do things our way, to give us what we needed, or at least what we thought we needed. We may have even bargained with our Higher Power, saying things like, “If You change the behavior of my loved one, I promise to be a better person.” But we were learning that attempting to force solutions or figure everything out on our own were actually forms of self-will.

Some of us experienced our work in Step Eleven as the ultimate surrender, which in turn opened us to our Higher Power’s gifts of ease, grace, joy, and abundance as we had never

before experienced **them**. When we surrendered our will to our Higher Power, we often found that we were provided with everything our hearts could want and need. By letting go of what we thought we wanted and **becoming** open to God's will for us, we discovered new possibilities and choices **and a sense of peace**. Step Eleven led us to paths that we might not have otherwise considered. Often, we received more wisdom than we **thought** possible **and more strength** than we could **have** mustered **ed** when left to our own devices.

This kind of surrender required immense trust. **I**n truth, trust was hard for many of us. In the past, and perhaps even in our current relationships, our trust had been violated. **The thought of** **t**rusting our Higher Power may have brought up **familiar** feelings of fear and wanting to control. We were gentle with ourselves as we wrestled with our faith and tried to trust the process anyway. We realized we **did not have** to do it alone nor **did we have to** do it perfectly. For those of us with past **religious traumas**, the idea of "God's will" could have felt punishing or frightening. We reminded ourselves that Higher Power was a loving presence in our lives that had our best interests at heart.

Our sponsors were there by our side, guiding us and sharing their experience, strength, and hope. They listened to us express our fears and doubts, and they encouraged us to reach out to our Higher Power for guidance when we felt stuck or unsure. We were inspired by our sponsors and fellow COSA members **when we heard them speak of** their connection **with** their own Higher Power. **We noticed their serenity and we felt hopeful.**

Even if we concluded that there were spiritual mysteries that we might never fully comprehend, we became more comfortable with not having all the answers. We began to trust implicitly. **As we let go of the responsibility of having to figure everything out, we** happily became the passenger and let Higher Power take the wheel.

In seeking God's guidance, we asked questions such as: "What is your will for me?" "How can I be the best version of myself?" "How can I best serve today?" "How can I carry out my purpose?" "What is my next step?" Or we simply prayed, "Your will, not mine, be done." As we worked this Step, many of us found that **the answers to these questions emerged and** transformed over time, sometimes daily or even by the hour.

Many of us established regular rituals to improve our conscious contact with God. Some created a spiritual routine to connect with God first thing in the morning. **We may** have paused to pray and meditate **at specific times throughout our day, or used a routine behavior, such as passing through a doorway or starting our car, as a Step Eleven reminder.** Some of us set an alarm to remind ourselves to check in spiritually or attended **ed** a COSA meeting **to help us** focus on Step **Eleven**. Many of us needed the **se** consistent, humble reminders **s** that **it was our Higher Power** running the show, **not us**.

Some **of us** received clear messages **that we** recognized **to be from our Higher Power.** As we **continued to practice Step Eleven,** our awareness **grew** and **our** intuition **became more** finely tuned. Many of us began to experience a feeling of being in sync and in step with God.

By listening to our Higher Power, we learned to hear our own truths. Before recovery, many of us felt disconnected from ourselves. Practicing the Eleventh Step brought us home to ourselves. We became aware of the inner voice **of our deepest self, which** knew **instinctively** what to do.

In addition to seeking God's will for us through prayer and meditation, we also sought the power to carry out that will. While we began Step One acknowledging our powerlessness, by the time we reached Step Eleven, many of us felt empowered to act from a place of spiritual centeredness and well-being. Whatever our Higher Power guided us to do, we began to feel both the clarity and courage to follow through. Action and empowerment were priceless gifts of our Step Eleven work.

### **The Gifts of Step Eleven**

*The Eleventh Step offered deepening spiritual connection, **love,** and grace. **This Step** brought us closer to God and helped us let go of our own will. We opened up to God's will and to the miracles of who we are on this Earth. We turned our faces toward a Higher Power and eagerly received the miraculous gifts of recovery.*

*Many of us experienced a deep sense of joy, peace, and freedom. We felt a calm growing within us, a sense that all would be well when we connected with our Higher Power's will for us. We experienced a new and deepened feeling of confidence, trust, and faith, knowing we were making decisions led by our Higher Power. When we **trusted** that things would work out, even when we did not see how, we felt peace. We confidently leaned into our Higher Power's strength and knew that we did not have to do it alone. We rested in the care of our Higher Power and in the loving fellowship of COSA.*