

## Step Ten

1 ***Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted***  
2 ***it.***

3 *In Steps One through Nine, we connect with a Higher Power and come to terms with our*  
4 *past. With Step Ten, we commit to continuously examining our assets and shortcomings*  
5 *and correcting our mistakes as soon as possible. This clears the way for us to learn,*  
6 *grow, and live in serenity.*

7 *Steps Ten, Eleven, and Twelve help us continue our new spiritual way of life. When we*  
8 *veer off course, Step Ten helps us right our ship, and Steps Eleven and Twelve help us*  
9 *navigate in alignment with Higher Power's will for us. Luckily, we can start working Steps*  
10 *Ten, Eleven, and Twelve as soon as we feel ready.*

### 11 **Approaching Step Ten**

12 Before recovery, with no definition of personal sobriety, many of us felt like victims to our  
13 own stormy sea of emotions. All too often, we reacted quickly or compulsively to feelings  
14 and situations. Our reactions and rash behaviors hurt others and left us emotionally  
15 hungover.

16 In COSA recovery, we defined our sobriety and began to experience emotional balance  
17 as a gift of working the Steps. As we gained perspective on the past, we knew we never  
18 wanted to return to the powerlessness and unmanageability that came from our old way  
19 of living. To maintain the steadiness of our sobriety, we could no longer afford to be  
20 tossed around by the tides of emotions and reactions. In many cases, we came to  
21 recognize how living in fear, assuming the worst, and acting on hasty judgments had  
22 damaged our lives and relationships. Other COSA members noticed how behaviors such  
23 as overanalysis, rigid perfectionism, and enmeshment with others had created a false  
24 sense of control, which eventually left us feeling empty.

25 To start Step Ten, we read literature and discussed with our sponsors and other COSA  
26 members how they worked this Step. We considered the variety of tools and approaches  
27 available. Ultimately, we each decided which method or combination worked best for us.  
28 Over time, our Step Ten practices evolved, and we made adjustments to keep things  
29 fresh.

30 The thirteen short words of this Step do not specify exactly when and how we should  
31 continue to take personal inventory. However, some practices adopted by COSA  
32 members are based on three types of inventories passed down from the creators of the  
33 Twelve Steps, Alcoholics Anonymous: (1) a "spot-check inventory" that may be done  
34 whenever needed; (2) a daily review with credits (things done well) and debits (things  
35 for which we may owe amends); and (3) annual or semiannual "housecleanings," or  
36 opportunities to check our progress overall.<sup>1</sup>

### 37 **Anytime Inventory**

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<sup>1</sup> Three types of inventories were first described in the book *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*, originally published by the A.A. Grapevine, Inc., in 1953.

38 The “spot-check,” or quick inventory, helped us deal with life on life’s terms each day.  
39 Whenever we noticed ourselves reacting to people, places, or things we could not  
40 control, many of us learned that taking a quick inventory could help us avoid acting on  
41 behaviors we would have regretted later. When we felt triggered or otherwise  
42 emotionally unbalanced or when we began losing our serenity, we learned to step back,  
43 breathe, and consider our options before acting. Some called this a “three-second rule”  
44 or a moment of self-restraint. We allowed ourselves the space to quickly reflect on our  
45 choices.

46 Many times, this saved us from emotional traps, such as pride, vengeance, and the  
47 need to control, that otherwise could have led to self-righteous criticism or argument.  
48 With a quick inventory, we began to successfully avoid old behaviors such as obsessing,  
49 manipulating, sulking, or raging. Instead, we practiced identifying our emotions, such as  
50 pain, fear, and shame. We learned to surrender the feelings, along with the situations  
51 that triggered them, to a power greater than ourselves.

52 As recovering members of COSA, we turned to the Twelve Steps and COSA tools. We  
53 learned that we could say a quick prayer, asking that we be inspired with a thought or  
54 action that aligned with our Higher Power’s will. We reminded ourselves of the decision  
55 we made in Step Three. Sometimes, we reached out to our sponsors or trusted COSA  
56 friends. Other times, we took a moment to journal. We learned to identify feelings and  
57 needs without judgment so that we could take care of ourselves. Recalling the acronym  
58 “HALT” helped us consider whether we might be hungry, angry, lonely, or tired.  
59 Sometimes, our quick inventory helped us realize that we had not honored our  
60 boundaries. We found the spot-check inventory could be helpful anytime, whether we  
61 used it several times a day or just occasionally.

## 62 **Daily Inventory**

63 Another helpful practice many of us adopted was that of taking a daily inventory. Some  
64 of us started with a simple mental review of our day, considering what we did well and  
65 what we could have done better. For some, this review took the form of an evening  
66 prayer and meditation ritual. Others preferred tools such as writing in a journal or using  
67 an app. At times, we found support by reaching out to our sponsors or other COSA  
68 members via phone, email, or text. Some of us participated in a meeting dedicated to  
69 Step Ten.

70 The daily inventory also gave us the opportunity to acknowledge our positive thoughts,  
71 intentions, efforts, and actions, even if they were unsuccessful. Some of us assessed  
72 how we felt throughout the day and how we had taken care of ourselves. Thanking our  
73 Higher Power daily and reflecting on gratitude helped many of us center ourselves  
74 spiritually.

75 We also considered where we may have made poor choices or acted from dishonest,  
76 self-centered, or unloving motives, such as anger, jealousy, pride, resentment, and fear.  
77 We thought about whether our actions had caused harm to anyone including ourselves.

78 As we reviewed our behavior honestly and objectively, we thought about whether we  
79 had rationalized incorrect behavior or, conversely, judged ourselves too harshly. We  
80 considered our motives for wanting to make amends. Were we taking responsibility for

81 our actions, or were we acting from an unhealthy place, such as trying to please or save  
82 others? Were we rushing to make peace in order to eliminate uncomfortable feelings?  
83 Discussing our inventory with our sponsors often helped us learn how to distinguish our  
84 personal responsibility in a situation from someone else's responsibility.

85 When reviewing our behavior, we sometimes noticed a character defect. We tried not to  
86 shame or berate ourselves. Instead, we prayed to be guided toward new and better  
87 behavior and thought about how we might act differently in the future. We asked our  
88 Higher Power to remove our defects and help us change. We prayed for the insight,  
89 courage, and willingness to make any necessary amends. Practicing patience and  
90 gratitude for our progress, rather than expecting perfection, set us free emotionally and  
91 spiritually.

92 We turned our focus toward the new behaviors that could replace those we wished to  
93 surrender. Visualizing ourselves making better choices in the future often facilitated real  
94 change. Some of us found ideas for new behaviors in COSA literature, such as the  
95 pamphlet *How to Use the Twelve Steps to Work through Any Conflict*. We also reflected  
96 on our previous work, such as our sobriety circles or list of behaviors we had created  
97 during Steps Six and Seven to replace our old, unwanted behaviors.

98 With our Higher Power's guidance and support, we resolved to make amends for our  
99 mistakes and put new behaviors into action. As we worked towards positive change, we  
100 embraced the notion that COSA is a program of spiritual help and healing, rather than a  
101 "self-help" program. We gratefully accepted divine forgiveness, grace, and love. Our  
102 daily review often concluded with humbly thanking our Higher Power for our progress.

### 103 **Annual or Semiannual Inventories**

104 After some time in recovery, many of us looked for an opportunity to evaluate how far we  
105 had come and to celebrate our successes and overall progress. Annual or semiannual  
106 inventories presented opportunities to consider our behavior over time and to expand  
107 our definition of sobriety. As we advanced in our Step work, we opened ourselves to  
108 acknowledging character defects that we may not have been ready or able to see  
109 previously. We valued the chance to set new intentions and goals for our spiritual and  
110 emotional development. Reviewing our progress with our sponsors or trusted COSA  
111 friends or others helped us recognize our growth and see where we could improve  
112 further.

### 113 **Progress, Not Perfection**

114 When we first started looking at Step Ten, many of us worried that we did not have the  
115 time and could not keep up this new routine. Some of us felt intimidated or struggled to  
116 find a process that worked for us. With the help of our sponsors and other COSA  
117 members, we established a realistic and achievable approach and accepted our  
118 progress, however slow it may have been. We felt inspired and grateful as we noticed  
119 the resulting improvements in our lives.

120 No matter which method or combination of approaches we chose, we found a way to honestly  
121 reflect on our thoughts, feelings, and behaviors. We were not able to do this perfectly every  
122 time, and occasionally, we slipped into old, destructive behaviors. When that happened, we

123 owned up to it, humbly asked for help to change, and committed to do better next time. We  
124 reminded ourselves that we sought progress, not perfection. Forgiving ourselves lovingly  
125 brought welcome relief and a deeper sense of self-acceptance. From that place of grace, our  
126 capacity to accept and forgive others increased.

127

### 128 **The Gifts of Step Ten**

129 *Step Ten helps us maintain the work accomplished in Steps Four through Nine. It calls on us to*  
130 *be mindful, humble, and accountable for our behavior on an ongoing basis. By assessing our*  
131 *behavior regularly, we can quickly recognize and correct choices that are not in alignment with*  
132 *our Higher Power's will for us.*

133 *Steps Ten, Eleven, and Twelve go hand in hand. In Step Ten, we reflect and communicate with*  
134 *our Higher Power through prayer and meditation; we build upon this conscious contact in Step*  
135 *Eleven. When we check our motives and take responsibility for our behaviors regularly, we free*  
136 *ourselves from the burden of fear and resentment. Clearing our minds and hearts creates space*  
137 *for our growth in Steps Eleven and Twelve, where we deepen our spirituality and give to others*  
138 *what we have received.*

139 *As we acknowledge our shortcomings and love ourselves anyway, we surrender fighting and*  
140 *struggling and open ourselves to love and acceptance. By accepting the fallibility of ourselves*  
141 *and others, we gradually develop the empathy and compassion to support our work in Step*  
142 *Twelve: carrying the message to those who still suffer. We receive these gifts as the result of*  
143 *working the Twelve Steps ourselves.*