

Step Ten

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

In Steps One through Nine, we become honest with our Higher Power, ourselves, and another human being; face our character flaws; and set right our past errors. With Step Ten, we commit to examining our assets and shortcomings regularly and to taking responsibility for our mistakes as soon as possible. This clears the way for us to continue to learn, grow, and live in serenity.

Steps Ten, Eleven, and Twelve help us maintain our new spiritual way of life. When we veer off course, Step Ten helps us right our ship, and Steps Eleven and Twelve help us navigate in alignment with Higher Power's will for us. Fortunately, in harmony with these last three Steps, we can become introspective and take responsibility for our behavior, deepen our spirituality, and provide service at any point in our recovery.

Approaching Step Ten

Before recovery, many of us felt like victims, subject to a stormy sea of emotions. We often reacted compulsively to feelings and situations. Our rash responses and behaviors hurt others and left us feeling emotionally, and sometimes physically, distressed. Or we hid in fear, avoided necessary action, and harmed ourselves in the process.

In COSA recovery, we defined our sobriety in terms of behaviors that were healthy for us—those we wanted to continue or begin. We also identified behaviors from which we wished to abstain—those that were not sober. As we worked the Steps with this clear understanding, we began to experience emotional balance and gain perspective on the past. In many cases, we came to recognize how living in fear, assuming the worst, and acting on hasty judgments had damaged our lives and relationships. We noticed how behaviors such as overanalysis, rigid perfectionism, and enmeshment with others had created a false sense of control, which eventually left us feeling empty and alone.

We soon realized we never wanted to return to the powerlessness and unmanageability that came from our old way of living. We were no longer willing to be tossed around by the tides of emotions and reactions. Instead, we wanted to maintain the steadiness of our sobriety. We learned that continuing to take personal inventory, as Step Ten recommends, could help.

The thirteen short words of this Step do not specify exactly how we should continue to take personal inventory. To get started, we discussed with our sponsors and other COSA members how they worked this Step. We read Twelve Step literature and considered the variety of tools and approaches available. Ultimately, we each decided which method or combination worked best for us. Over time, our Step Ten practices evolved, and we made adjustments to keep things fresh and aligned with our continuing personal growth.

Some practices adopted by COSA members are passed down from the founders of Alcoholics Anonymous, who gave us the Twelve Steps. A.A. described three types of inventories: (1) a spot-check inventory that may be done whenever needed; (2) a daily review with credits (things done well) and debits (things for which we may owe amends);

and (3) annual or semiannual “housecleanings,” or opportunities to check our overall progress.¹

Anytime Inventory

The spot-check inventory helped us deal with life on life’s terms each day. Whenever we felt emotionally unbalanced or noticed ourselves beginning to lose serenity, we learned to take a spiritual pause—to step back, breathe, and connect with our Higher Power. We learned to take a quick inventory of our feelings, thoughts, and options before acting.

We sought to recognize thoughts and actions that were based in dishonesty, fear, resentment, or self-seeking motives. Emotional pain, shame, self-pity, and fear were often at the root of our agitation.

We practiced identifying our feelings and needs without judgment so that we could take care of ourselves. Recalling the acronym “HALT” helped us consider whether we might be hungry, angry, lonely, or tired. Sometimes, we realized that we had not honored our boundaries.

As recovering members of COSA, we turned to the Twelve Steps and COSA tools. We prayed for guidance from our Higher Power, asking that we be inspired with thoughts and actions that aligned with our Higher Power’s will. We reminded ourselves of the decision we made in Step Three. Sometimes, tools such as writing in a journal and practicing self-care helped restore the serenity and emotional balance we needed to clearly see the right actions to take.

We also learned that overthinking, obsessing, and sulking were not healthy behaviors because they concealed our Higher Power’s message and kept us in a self-centered place. Instead, we reached out to our sponsors and trusted COSA friends. If we needed to discuss a situation with another person or make amends, we did so as soon as possible and then quickly turned our thoughts toward how we could serve others, according to our Higher Power’s will.

Many times, this saved us from emotional traps, such as pride, vengefulness, and the desire to control, that otherwise could have led to self-righteous criticism or argument. Whether we used it several times a day or just occasionally, we found that the spot-check inventory allowed us to successfully avoid behaviors such as manipulating and raging. Instead, we learned to surrender the feelings, along with the related people and situations, to a Power greater than ourselves. In this way, we continued to replace unwanted reactions with healthier behaviors.

Daily Inventory

Many of us adopted the practice of taking a daily inventory. For some, this was simply a mental review during which we considered what we did well and what we could have done better. Some of us incorporated a self-review into an evening prayer and meditation ritual. Tools such as journals and apps made the process easier for some. Discussing our inventory with sponsors or other COSA members helped some of us

¹ 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.

develop good habits and accountability. Participating in a meeting dedicated to Step Ten was another choice.

The daily inventory gave us the opportunity to acknowledge our positive thoughts, intentions, efforts, and actions. Some of us assessed how we felt throughout the day and how we had taken care of ourselves. We thought about how we treated others, considering whether we had been kind and loving toward everyone. Thanking our Higher Power daily and reflecting on gratitude helped many of us center ourselves spiritually.

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

As we reviewed our behavior honestly and objectively, we asked ourselves whether we had rationalized unhealthy behavior, which we knew to be denial. Conversely, had we judged ourselves too harshly, perhaps taking on criticisms or blame for things that were not our responsibility? We considered our motives for wanting to make amends. Were we taking responsibility for our actions, or were we acting from an unhealthy place, such as trying to please or save others? Were we rushing to make peace in order to eliminate uncomfortable feelings? Discussing our inventory with our sponsors often helped us learn how to distinguish our personal responsibility in a situation from someone else's responsibility.

When reviewing our behavior, we sometimes noticed our character defects. We tried not to shame or berate ourselves. Instead, we prayed, expressing gratitude to our Higher Power for the new awareness. We asked our Higher Power to remove our defects, guide us toward healthier new behaviors, and help us change. We thought about how we might act differently in the future. We also prayed for the insight, willingness, and courage to make any necessary amends. Practicing patience and gratitude for our progress, rather than expecting perfection, was essential to our emotional and spiritual healing.

We turned our focus toward the new behaviors that could replace those we wished to surrender. Visualizing ourselves making better choices in the future often facilitated real change. Some of us found ideas for new behaviors in COSA literature. We also reflected on our previous work, such as our sobriety circles or the list of behaviors we may have created during Steps Six and Seven to replace our old, unwanted behaviors.

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

Annual or Semiannual Inventories

After some time in recovery, many of us looked for an opportunity to evaluate how far we had come and to celebrate our successes and overall progress. Annual or semiannual inventories presented opportunities to consider our behavior over time and to revisit our

definition of sobriety. As we advanced in our Step work, we opened ourselves to acknowledging character defects that we may not have been able or ready to see previously. We valued the chance to set new intentions and goals for our spiritual, emotional, and **interpersonal** development. Reviewing our progress with our sponsors, trusted COSA friends, or others helped us recognize our growth and see where we could **continue to** improve.

Progress, Not Perfection

When we first started looking at Step Ten, many of us worried that we did not have the time and could not keep up this new routine. Some of us felt intimidated or struggled to find a process that worked for us. With the help of our sponsors and other COSA members, we established a realistic and achievable approach and **celebrated** our progress. We felt inspired and grateful as we noticed the **continuing** improvements in our lives.

No matter which method or combination of approaches we chose, we found a way to honestly reflect on our thoughts, feelings, and behaviors. We were not able to do this perfectly, and occasionally we slipped into old, **unhealthy** behaviors. When that happened, we owned up to it, humbly asked for help to change, and committed to do better next time. We reminded ourselves that we sought progress not perfection.

As we acknowledged our shortcomings and loved ourselves anyway, we surrendered our tendency to fight and struggle. Forgiving ourselves **with love and kindness** brought welcome relief and a deeper sense of self-acceptance. **As we accepted our own fallibility, our empathy and compassion for others grew as well.** From that place of **compassion**, our capacity to accept and forgive others increased. **This depth of understanding and emotional maturity helped us carry the message to those who still suffer.**

The Gifts of Step Ten

Step Ten helps us **continue** the work accomplished in Steps **One** through Nine. It calls on us to be mindful, humble, and accountable for our behavior on an ongoing basis. By regularly assessing our behavior, we can quickly **evaluate which behaviors align** with our Higher Power's will for us; **then, we can choose wisely and with intention. If we owe amends, we admit it and move forward without delay.**

Steps Ten, Eleven, and Twelve go hand in hand. In Step Ten, we reflect **humbly** and communicate **honestly**. When we **routinely** check our motives and take responsibility for our behaviors, we free ourselves from the burden of fear and resentment. Clearing our minds and hearts creates space for our growth in Steps Eleven and Twelve, where we deepen our spirituality and give to others what we have received. **With gratitude, we recognize that the COSA promises are coming true in our lives.**