

Using the Twelve Steps to Work Through a Specific Situation

Introduction

As COSA members, we gain a new approach to life: applying the Twelve Steps. Learning to use the systematic approach of the Steps has helped many of us resolve difficulties in our daily lives. When we apply the Steps, we're often able to see situations from a new perspective, which helps us avoid the traps of our old way of thinking. When we feel paralyzed, overwhelmed, reactive, or triggered, we can work the Steps with a focus on the particular situation affecting us. Using the Steps this way is a tool that can bring us clarity, comfort, and relief.

The use of this tool is not intended to replace our comprehensive Step work, in which we examine our life as a whole. The "Working the Steps" section of this book provides detailed information about each Step and may be a helpful resource for putting this chapter into action, especially if we experience difficulty applying a particular Step to the situation at hand.

This chapter offers questions to consider when working each Step around a specific circumstance. How we utilize the suggested questions is a personal choice. We may work with a sponsor or COSA friend who can provide guidance and support as we untangle complicated situations. Our guide might also help us recognize and take responsibility for any part we may have played in the situation. We may come up with additional questions and considerations to help us address the situation from the perspective of the Twelve Steps.

Before we begin, many of us find it helpful to say the Serenity Prayer and ask our Higher Power for guidance. We then write a concise description of the situation with which we are struggling. We focus on our role in the situation, rather than on the behaviors of others, and we refrain from assigning blame to others. Answering the questions in this chapter may help us gain a better perspective about the issue at hand and develop deeper insights that can support our recovery.

The Steps

1. Step One: We admitted we were powerless over compulsive sexual behavior, that our lives had become unmanageable.

Questions related to Step One:

- a) What people, places, and things am I powerless over in this particular circumstance?
Considering what particularly frustrates us may help in responding to this question.
- b) What, in particular, am I powerless to change or control in this situation?
- c) How is this situation making my life unmanageable?

- 45 d) How might my reaction to this situation contribute to making my life unmanageable?
46 e) How has this unmanageability affected my serenity?

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48 2. Step Two: Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.

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50 Questions related to Step Two:

- 51 a) What am I doing that is self-defeating, unhealthy, or potentially fueling the problem in
52 this situation?
53 b) How can I invite my Higher Power into this situation?
54 c) Do I believe that my Higher Power can restore my sanity in this situation? If so, how might
55 that look and feel?

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57 3. Step Three: Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we
58 understood God.

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60 Questions related to Step Three:

- 61 a) What is my will in this situation?
62 b) Am I willing and ready to turn my will about this situation and its outcome over to the
63 care of my Higher Power?
64 c) What does “the care of God” mean in this situation?
65 d) Am I willing and ready to accept my Higher Power’s will for me? If not, what do I need to
66 become willing and ready? Am I willing to be willing?
67 e) How will I know my Higher Power’s will for me in this situation?
68 *It may help to say a prayer, asking Higher Power to help us surrender our will in this*
69 *specific situation. It may also help to write an affirmation specific to the situation, e.g., “I*
70 *now turn my fear and anxiety over to my Higher Power.”*

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72 4. Step Four: Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.

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74 Questions related to Step Four:

- 75 a) Am I behaving exactly as I have in the past and expecting different results this time?
76 b) What am I doing that might be preventing me from experiencing sanity?
77 c) What resentments, hurts, or fears do I have about this issue?
78 d) Toward whom and what do I feel resentments?
79 e) Am I in denial or being dishonest with myself or others in this situation?
80 f) Which of my character defects, or unhealthy coping mechanisms, may be in play in this
81 situation?
82 g) Which of my assets can I recognize or use in this particular situation?

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84 5. Step Five: Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of
85 our wrongs.

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87 Questions related to Step Five:

- 88 a) What is the exact nature of my wrongs?

- 89 b) What part, if any, have I contributed to this situation?
90 c) What harmful core beliefs about myself are coming up in this situation? (for example, “I
91 am bad,” “I am not enough,” “I am unlovable, unwanted, unsafe,” etc.)

92 *Many of us share our responses with our sponsors or trusted COSA friends. We may*
93 *begin by saying a prayer to invite our Higher Power into the discussion and to remind*
94 *ourselves that this is a spiritual practice.*

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- 96 6. Step Six: Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.

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98 Questions related to Step Six:

- 99 a) How are my character defects, or unhealthy coping mechanisms, hurting me and others
100 in this situation?

101 *We may consider the negative consequence(s) of each of our unhealthy behaviors and*
102 *the potential positive consequence(s) of surrendering the behaviors.*

- 103 b) What benefit am I receiving from continuing the unhealthy behaviors?

- 104 c) Do I feel entirely ready to turn over my character defects to my Higher Power in this
105 situation? If not, what is preventing me from moving forward? Am I willing to be willing?

- 106 d) How might I think, feel, and behave if my shortcomings were removed or lifted?

107 *It often helps to imagine thinking, feeling, and behaving differently (referred to in a COSA*
108 *slogan as “acting as if”).*

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- 110 7. Step Seven: Humbly asked God to remove our shortcomings.

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112 Questions related to Step Seven:

- 113 a) How might I humbly ask God to remove my shortcomings in this situation?

114 *If we feel comfortable, we may write a brief letter or speak this request aloud to*
115 *emphasize our willingness to have the shortcoming(s) removed. We may want to share*
116 *our prayer with a sponsor or COSA friend.*

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- 118 8. Step Eight. Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends
119 to them all.

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121 Questions related to Step Eight:

- 122 a) To whom have I caused harm in this situation?

123 *We make sure to consider whether to include ourselves in this list.*

- 124 b) How have I caused harm?

- 125 c) Am I willing to make amends to each person, including myself?

- 126 d) Do I need to forgive myself or anyone else before I feel willing?

- 127 e) What else can I do to become ready to make amends?

128 *We may consider using tools such as journaling, meditation, and prayer; including*
129 *praying for the other person and praying for the willingness to make amends. The prayer*
130 *or blessing could be as simple as “God bless _____ (someone on your resentment*
131 *list) and heal me.” Some of us write a “venting letter” to be destroyed rather than sent.*

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133 9. Step Nine: Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so
134 would injure them or others.

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136 Questions related to Step Nine:

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138 a) How can I make amends for the harms I have caused in this situation?

139 b) Do I need help becoming ready to make amends?

140 c) If I don't feel ready, whom will I consult for guidance?

141 d) Might living or symbolic amends be appropriate in this situation?

142 e) Can I commit to making these amends?

143 f) What will I do and when?

144 g) Can I ask my sponsor or another COSA member to act as an accountability partner—
145 someone with whom I can check-in before and after I make my amends?

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148 10. Step Ten: Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted
149 it.

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151 Questions related to Step Ten:

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153 a) Is anything related to this situation unfinished? If so, what?

154 b) What am I doing well?

155 c) What can I improve?

156 d) How can I use my daily inventory to continue to understand and learn from the situation
157 and others similar to it?

158 e) What changes might I make to help me avoid or address similar situations in the future?

159 *We need only be concerned with our part in the situation. We recognize that we cannot*

160 *change others' behaviors, their roles in the situation, or how the situation affects them.*

161 *We focus specifically on our own progress. Checking in with our sponsor might help us*

162 *to stay on track toward finding serenity in the situation.*

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165 11. Step Eleven: Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with
166 God as we understood God, praying only for knowledge of God's will for us and the power to
167 carry that out.

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169 Questions related to Step Eleven:

170 a) What is my Higher Power's will for me in this particular situation?

171 b) Am I willing to continue to ask for guidance and strength from my Higher Power about
172 this over the next few days or weeks?

173 *In addition to praying for knowledge of God's will for us and the power to carry it out, we*

174 *may benefit from opening our hearts to gratitude for this tool and our Higher Power,*

175 *program, sponsor, and fellowship—all of which have helped us get to a better place.*

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12. Step Twelve: Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these Steps, we tried to carry this message to others and to practice these principles in all areas of our lives.

Questions related to Step Twelve:

- a) How do I feel about this situation now that I have used the Twelve Steps to work through it?
- b) What lessons have I learned?
- c) Have I experienced a spiritual awakening or gained spiritual insight as a result of using this tool?
- d) How can I use my acquired insight to serve others?
- e) What is the message that I can carry and how might I do that?

It may be beneficial to write a brief affirmation that encapsulates the lessons we learned from using the Steps for our specific situation. We may post the written affirmation somewhere that is visible to us throughout our day.

