

BACK TO BASICS RECOVERY MEETING

"A Design for Living"

For MEDIA ADDICTS ANONYMOUS

Meeting Format for Session 3 – Steps 5 through 10

Welcome to Session Three of the "Back to Basics—A Design for Living" meetings of Media Addicts Anonymous that will change your life! Please put down all non-essential electronic media while listening to these sessions. By focusing on this meeting without distractions you will be able to access the recovery power of what these "Back to Basics" meetings offer.

My name is _____, a recovering member of Media Addicts Anonymous and I am your moderator for this session.

Please join me in saying the Serenity Prayer:

God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, courage to change the things I can, and wisdom to know the difference.

During these four sessions, we are learning how to recover from Media Addiction by taking the Twelve Steps as described in the Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous — a spiritually based “program of action” that provides us with a new way of living free of compulsive media usage. The writers of this book testify that:

"A new life has been given us or, if you prefer, 'A design for living' that really works."

We will be reading from the Big Book of Alcoholic Anonymous and the pamphlet, “Back to Basics – The Alcoholics Anonymous Beginners’ Meetings,” subtitled “The Steps We Took, in Four One-Hour Sessions” which is a compilation of the early formats for Beginners’ Meetings used successfully in the 1940’s. These sessions accounted for the phenomenal success rate of the early members. This simple format enables beginners to take all 12 steps in 4 sessions. This program is not required before being sponsored, but it does enable members to quickly receive the help they needed via a life-changing spiritual awakening. Later, once you have found a sponsor, you can go through the Steps in greater detail.

When reading from the Big Book, I may substitute or add Media addiction concepts where appropriate. To make this format more inclusive, I will change the pronouns from third-person singular to third-person plural.

So far, we have taken steps One through Five.

Let’s see how many are still on track. If you completed your Fourth Step inventories and have shared them with another person, please state your name followed by "yes."

Congratulations! We commend you for having the willingness, honesty, and open-mindedness to do what is necessary to recover from Media Addiction.

These Steps offer us a new way of living—far more beautiful than anything we ever could have imagined. That’s why we take the Steps, and that’s why we take them again and again. Your willingness to take the Steps guarantees the promised spiritual awakening that will bring miracles into your life.

In this session we are going to ask the God of our understanding to remove the liabilities we identified in our Fourth Step. Before we go forward, however, let's remind ourselves why, as media addicts, we must find a way to be rid of our fears and resentments.

"It is plain that a life which includes deep resentment leads only to futility and unhappiness. To the precise extent that we permit these, do we squander the hours that might have been worthwhile. But the [media addict], whose hope is the maintenance and growth of a spiritual experience, this business of resentment is

infinitely grave. We have found that it is fatal. For when harboring such feeling we shut ourselves off from the sunlight of the Spirit. The insanity of [compulsively using media] returns and we [binge] again...If we were to live, we had to be free of anger...[these liabilities] may be the dubious luxury of normal [people], but for the [media addict] these things are poison."

We understand from this passage that in order to stay sober with media we must find a way to remove the personal liabilities we discovered about ourselves in our Fourth Step inventory and replace them with those assets we want to consciously cultivate on a daily basis. The Big Book authors give us a quick and practical way of doing this:

"We Turned back to the list... We were prepared to look at it from an entirely different angle. We began to see that...the people who wronged us were perhaps spiritually sick. Though we did not like their symptoms and the way these disturbed us, they, like ourselves, were sick too. We asked [our Higher Power] to help us show them the same tolerance, pity, and patience that we would cheerfully grant a sick friend. When a person offended we said: 'This is a sick [individual]. How can I be helpful to [them]? God save me from being angry. They will be done.' "

When we confessed our resentments and fear to another person, i.e., **Step 5 -- Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs**, God revealed to us, through the help of another person, the shortcomings that have been blocking us from the "sunlight of the Spirit." The "Big Book" authors announce that, once we admit our shortcomings, our lives begin to change. We start to experience a "transformation of thought and attitude."

"...Once we have taken this step, withholding nothing, we are delighted. We can look the world in the eye. We can be alone at perfect peace and ease. Our fears fall from us. We begin to feel the nearness of our Creator. We may have had certain spiritual beliefs, but now we begin to have a **spiritual experience**. The feeling that the [media] problem has disappeared will often come strongly. We feel we are on the Broad Highway, walking hand in hand with the Spirit of the Universe."

Let us remember that every time we share our Fourth Step inventory with someone else, we begin to release the guilt, shame, and fear holding us back from manifesting the life purpose our Higher Power would have for us. We discover that we are not alone as we identify with others and find freedom. Through **SHARING** the authors tell us we are in the process of having a spiritual experience and as a result, our need to compulsive use media is being removed.

After giving away our Fourth Step to another person, the Big Book authors ask us to pause and reflect. This is something we should not overlook if we are to be ready to continue with the rest of the steps:

"Returning home we find a place where we can be quiet for an hour, carefully reviewing what we have done. We thank [our Higher Power] from the bottom of our heart... Taking [the Big Book] down from our shelf we turn to the page which contains the twelve steps. Carefully reading the first five proposals we ask if we have omitted anything...Is our work solid so far?"

We are going to take a moment to review the steps and ask ourselves if we have taken them sincerely or if there is something we may have omitted:

1. We admitted we were powerless over Media—that our lives had become unmanageable.
2. Came to believe that a Power greater than our selves could restore us to sanity.
3. Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood God.
4. Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.
5. Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.

We will now pause for one minute to meditate on our progress so far. [Time for 1 minute]

Congratulations on taking the first five steps. We are entering the phase of the program where more actions are required. These actions produce results. Many of these results are in the form of promises which, as our lives change, become an integral part of our spiritual being.

We will now proceed to the Sixth Step:

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

In this Step, the "Big Book" authors have us answer a simple question.

"...Are we now ready to let God remove from us all the things which we have admitted are objectionable? Can [your Higher Power] now take them all—every one?"

At first glance, Step Six seems like a piece of cake. Of course we want all our defects of character removed, we are tired of our suffering. However, we must pause and look at the word "entirely". This word means, completely, 100%, totally, absolutely. It's important to pause and see if you are entirely ready to have your liabilities removed. We don't want to proceed if we are merely giving lip service to this step. Let's take another look at our list of liabilities.

- Resentment (the consequence of being angry or bitter toward someone for an extended period of time)
- Fear (the fear of losing something you have or not getting what you want)
- Selfishness/Self-centeredness (the concern only for ourselves and our own welfare or pleasure without regard for others)
- Dishonesty (involves theft or deceptions, cheating, lying or withholding the truth)
- False Pride (feelings of being better than [grandiosity, superiority, know it all] or less than [shame, unworthiness, low self-esteem])
- Mistrust (jealousy that has to do with suspicion, and distrusting other's motives and doubting the faithfulness of a friend)
- Envy (the desire to have a quality, possession, or other desirable attribute belonging to someone else)
- Procrastination (a kind of laziness to work or avoidance to follow through with right actions)

Observe how these defects of character have affected your life and the lives of others. Take a moment to reflect. Are there still defects you want to hold onto?

We stated earlier that we are not saints, rather we are people who are willing to live life on a spiritual basis. Therefore we seek spiritual progress not spiritual perfection. If you cannot say that you are entirely ready to have God remove a defect of character, the Big Book authors ask if you would be open to asking God to help you be willing: "If we still cling to something we will not let go, we ask God to help us be willing."

Sometimes giving up a resentment feels impossible. We have built our life story and our whole identity on a wrong we feel has been committed against us. This is where we must ask for willingness and more willingness and of course, use our Higher Power to guide us and give us the clarity and action to find forgiveness. One early AA member tells of how she became willing to release her resentments:

"...Self-pity and resentment were my constant companions and my inventory began to look like a thirty-three year diary, for I seemed to have a resentment against everybody I had ever known. All but one "responded to the treatment" suggested in the Steps immediately, but this one posed a problem."

"It was against my mother and it was twenty-five years old. I had fed it, fanned it, and nurtured it as one might a delicate child, and it had become as much a part of me as breathing. It had provided me with excuses for my lack of education, my marital failures, personal failures, inadequacy, and of course, my [media addiction]....I was reluctant to let it go."

"...In my prayers [one] morning I asked God to point out to me some way to be free of this resentment."

God answered her prayers by an article she read in a magazine that day. A prominent clergyman wrote that if you wanted to be free of a resentment, pray for the person you resent.

"Ask for their health, their prosperity, their happiness, and you will be free. Even when you don't really want it for them...Do it everyday for two weeks and...you will realize that where you used to feel bitterness and resentment and hatred, you now feel compassionate understanding and love."

"It worked for me then, and it has worked for me many times since, and it will work for me every time I am willing to work it."

What we learn from this passage is that, if we want our character liabilities to be removed we need to meet God part way. We need to take action through prayer and include our Higher Power in this process. This is important throughout every step we take, we don't do it alone. We take the step with our sponsor and/or action partner(s) and we take the step with our Higher Power.

So, according to the "Big Book" authors, it is decision time once again.

During the Fifth Step, we identified our liabilities using the assets and liabilities checklist that we discussed last session. In the Sixth Step, we are thoroughly preparing ourselves to turn these shortcomings over to the God of our understanding.

We need to approach this step with honesty and sincerity, otherwise we will just be going through the motions. If we are still holding on to some of our shortcomings, we need to pray for the willingness to let them go. In order to do this we will pause to meditate and pray, to ask God for the willingness to remove the liabilities we still want to hold onto. I will come back after 1 minutes of silence. (Time for 1 minute)

Now, it is time to answer the Sixth Step question:

"Are you now ready to let God remove from you all the things which you have admitted are objectionable?" If so, please state your name, followed by "Yes."

Thank you.

According to the "Big Book" authors, if you who answered "yes" to this question you have completed the Sixth Step and are ready to proceed to Step Seven.

Step 7 -- Humbly asked God to remove our shortcomings.

This step is straightforward. It consists of a prayer in which we ask God to remove our liabilities and strengthen our assets so we can be of maximum service to all.

This prayer is found in the second paragraph on page 76,

"...My Creator, I am now willing that you should have all of me, good and bad. I pray that you now remove from me every single defect of character which stands in the way of my usefulness to you and my fellows. Grant me strength, as I go out from here, to do your bidding. Amen."

This prayer is so important that we should take a moment to unpack its meaning.

It begins with "My Creator," this is a recognition that, no matter what we believe about ourselves, each of us emanate from a divine source and this means that we have the qualities of this divine creative source within us.

"I am now willing that you should have all of me, good and bad"—The next part of this prayer is our willingness to be loved by our Higher Power completely, to be vulnerable and authentic by saying that God can now have all of us, just as we would give ourselves wholly to a trusted friend or partner—warts and all. We recognize in this prayer that we have within us assets as well as liabilities.

"I pray that you now remove from me every single defect of character..."— We then pray to have every single "defect of character" removed. Character has to do with our personality, temperament, mentality, habits, etc. "Defect" means, imperfection, weakness, limitation, shortcoming, etc.

Now here is something interesting about the rest of this sentence, "...remove from me every single defect of character **which stands in the way of my usefulness to you and my fellows...**" We ask for all defects of character be removed which stand in the way of our usefulness to God and to our fellows. What the Big Book authors are reminding us is that our defects of character are not removed for self-centered reasons— just to make us look or feel better. They are removed because this is how we can best serve God and our fellows.

"Grant me strength as I go out from here," —The last part of this prayer is to ask for strength going forward. We let go of yesterday and ask for the strength to go out from where we stand right now. "...to do your bidding." —This is followed with the desire to follow God's guidance, Earlier, when we took the Third Step, we decided to have a new director in our movie of life. In allowing our Higher Power this role, we ask for continual guidance to do our Higher Power's will.

If you are ready to take the Seventh Step, please read the prayer along with me. [*Read the prayer a second time.*]

“...My Creator, I am now willing that you should have all of me, good and bad. I pray that you now remove from me every single defect of character which stands in the way of my usefulness to you and my fellows. Grant me strength, as I go out from here, to do your bidding. Amen.”

Congratulations, according to the “Big Book” authors, you have taken Step Seven!

END OF PART 1

PART 2

Now, it is time to clear away the wreckage of our past. We do this by making amends or restitution. Please have your fourth step inventory in front of you as well as a piece of paper and writing instrument.

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

The “Big Book” authors state, “made a list.” Do we need to make this list? Actually, no! We compiled our list as part of our Fourth Step.

“Now we need more action, without which we find that ‘Faith without works is dead.’ Let’s look at *Steps Eight and Nine*. We have a list of all persons we have harmed and to whom we are willing to make amends. We made it when we took inventory.”

That’s why we hold onto our Fourth Step inventory. It contains our Eighth Step amends list. Referring to our assets and liabilities checklist, go through and find the places that you were at fault and where you need to make an amends. We will allow one minute for you to go back and make your list. [Time this for one minute.]

In addition to our inventory, we must also get honest with how we have harmed others through our media addiction. Merely staying sober with media won’t cut it. The Big Book authors tell us:

“...Sometimes we hear [a media addict] say that the only thing [they] need to do is to keep sober. Certainly [they] must keep sober, for there will be no [movement forward] if [they don’t]. But it is yet a long way from making good to [our partners, children, friends, boss] or parents whom for years [have been] so shockingly treated...”

“The [media addict] is like a tornado roaring [their] way through the lives of others. Hearts are broken. Sweet relationships are dead. Affections have been uprooted. Selfish and inconsiderate habits have kept the home in turmoil. We feel a [person] is unthinking when [they] says that sobriety is enough.”

With this understanding in mind we are going to spend some time to look at where our media addiction has affected other people in our lives. Please answer the following questions:

1. Where have you used media to avoid getting close to someone else? Who was hurt by this? [pause]
2. Where have you used media to fight with someone? Who was hurt by this?[pause]
3. Where have you used media to gossip or destroy someone else's reputation? Who was hurt by this? [pause]
4. Where have you used media to avoid not working for your boss (your boss can include yourself if you are self-employed)? Who was hurt by this? [pause]
5. Where have you used media to avoid helping and giving service to others? Who was hurt by this?[pause]
6. Where have you used media to avoid seeking help from your Higher Power? Who was hurt by this?[pause]
7. Where have you used media to avoid your own feelings? Who was hurt by this? [pause]
8. Where have you used media to avoid being in your body and in nature? Who was hurt by this?[pause]

We will take a minute to make a list of people who we have harmed by our media addiction and add it to our amends list. [1 minute]

If you have made your list of amends, please state your name followed by "yes."

According to the “Big Book” authors, if you have answered "yes" to this question you have taken Step Eight.

Let's move on to the Ninth Step.

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

The amends process is explained in detail on pages 76 through 83.

“...Now we go out to our fellows and repair the damage done in the past. We attempt to sweep away the debris which has accumulated out of our effort to live on self-will and run the show ourselves. If we haven't the will to do this, we ask until it comes. Remember it was agreed at the beginning *we would go to any lengths for victory over alcohol (or in our case, media addiction).*”

We may be hesitant to make amends to those who are still upset with us or suspicious of our motives. The authors provide us with guidelines on how to approach these individuals:

“Probably there are still some misgivings. As we look over the list of business acquaintances and friends we have hurt, we may feel diffident about going to some of them on a spiritual basis. Let us be reassured. To some people we need not, and probably should not emphasize the spiritual feature on our first approach. We might prejudice them. At the moment we are trying to put our lives in order. But this is not an end in itself. Our real purpose is to fit ourselves to be of maximum service to God and the people about us.”

In that last sentence, the authors clearly state our purpose for living. They tell us why we are here — to serve God and our fellows. Then they ask us to let our actions, rather than our words, demonstrate to others that we have changed.

“...It is seldom wise to approach an individual, who still smarts from our injustice to [them], and announce that we have gone religious. In the prize ring, this would be called leading with the chin. Why lay ourselves open to being branded fanatics or religious bores? We may kill a future opportunity to carry a beneficial message. But our [person] is sure to be impressed with a sincere desire to set right the wrong. [They are] going to be more interested in a demonstration of good will than in our talk of spiritual discoveries.”

One of the most difficult amends to make is to someone we genuinely don't like. But, whether we like the person or not, we must proceed.

“...Nevertheless, with a person we dislike, we take the bit in our teeth. It is harder to go to an enemy than to a friend, but we find it much more beneficial to us. We go to [them] in a helpful and forgiving spirit, confessing our former ill feeling and expressing our regret.”

The “Big Book” authors even provide us with instructions on what to say:

“Under no condition do we criticize such a person or argue. Simply we tell [them] that we will never get over [media addiction] until we have done our utmost to straighten out the past. We are there to sweep off our side of the street, realizing that nothing worthwhile can be accomplished until we do so, never trying to tell [them] what [they] should do. [Their] faults are not discussed. We stick to our own. If our manner is calm, frank, and open, we will be gratified with the result.”

The authors make it clear what we are to do about our debts, which is to pay them. The process forces us to rely on God for the strength and courage to make good on our “past misdeeds.”

“Most [media addicts] owe money. We do not dodge our creditors... Arranging the best deal we can, we let these people know we are sorry. Our [media addiction] has made us slow to pay. We must lose our fear of creditors no matter how far we have to go, for we are liable to [compulsively use media again] if we are afraid to face them.”

Keep in mind that courage is not the absence of fear. Courage is facing the fear and walking through it.

The “Big Book” authors instruct us to let the God of our understanding be our guide. This reliance upon God is essential, if we are to outgrow the fears that have separated us from the “One who has all power.”

“Although these reparations take innumerable forms, there are some general principles which we find guiding. Reminding ourselves that we have decided to go to any lengths to find a spiritual experience, we ask that we be given strength and direction to do the right thing, no matter what the personal consequences may be. We may lose our position or reputation or face jail, but we are willing. We have to be. We must not shrink at anything.”

We are advised to be very conscientious of how we are making amends. We may need to make sure that we are not hurting anyone else or implicating anyone else. The more serious the situation the more we seek our Higher Power's help.

"Before taking drastic action which might implicate other people, we secure their consent. If we have obtained permission, have consulted with others, asked [our Higher Power] to help and the drastic step is indicated, we must not shrink."

"Perhaps there are some cases where the utmost frankness is demanded. No outsider can appraise such an intimate situation. It may be that both will decide that the way of good sense and loving kindness is to let bygones be bygones. Each might pray about it, having the other one's happiness uppermost in mind."

Media addiction in the form of Porn, dating and hook up sites, can cause very real injury to loved ones and can wreak havoc on the whole family. The Big Book authors carefully give us guidelines on how to approach this.

"The chances are that we have domestic troubles. Perhaps we are mixed up with a [person on line] we wouldn't care to have advertised...[Media addiction] does complicate sex relations in the home...perhaps [a media addict] is having a secret and exciting affair with '[a person] who understands!'"

"Whatever the situation, we usually have to do something about it. If you are sure your [partner] does not know, should you tell [them]? Not always, we think. If [they know] in a general way that you have been wild, should you tell [them] in detail? Undoubtedly we should admit our fault. [They] may insist on knowing all the particulars... We feel we ought to say to [them] that we have no right to involve another person. We are sorry for what we have done and, God willing, it shall not be repeated. More than that we cannot do; we have no right to go further. Though there may be justifiable exceptions, and though we wish to lay down no rule of any sort, we have often found this the best course to take."

The authors invite us to allow the principles of the program to guide both partners in finding a healthy and healing resolution. We are reminded how difficult some amends can be, especially if there is jealousy.

"Our design for living is not a one-way street... It is better... that one does not needlessly name a person upon whom [their partner] can vent jealousy."

"...It may be that both will decide that the way of good sense and loving kindness is to let bygones be bygones. Each might pray about it, having the other one's happiness uppermost in mind. Keep it always in sight that we are dealing with that most terrible human emotion—jealousy."

Online gambling and other compulsive shopping affect the financial security of the family, employees, and businesses. In these cases we must take sincere actions to right the wrongs we have caused to those who we promised to love, support, and protect. The Big Book authors emphatically state that being sober with our media is only the beginning. We must take additional action if we are to recover.

"Yes, there is a long period of reconstruction ahead. We must take the lead. A remorseful mumbling that we are sorry won't fill the bill at all. We ought to sit down with the family and frankly analyze the past as we now see it, being very careful not to criticize them. Their defects may be glaring, but the chances are that our own actions are partly responsible. So we clean house with the family, asking each morning in meditation that our Creator show us the way of patience, tolerance, kindness and love... The spiritual life is not a theory. *We have to live it.*"

Here we're told that, in order to recover from our media addiction we don't just take the Steps, we *live* the Steps, on a daily basis.

END OF PART 2

PART 3

The Big Book authors give us directions on what to do if we can't make amends to someone face-to-face:

"There may be some wrongs we can never fully right. We don't worry about them if we can honestly say to ourselves that we would right them if we could. Some people cannot be seen—we send them an honest letter... There may be a valid reason for postponement in some cases. But we don't delay if it can be avoided.

We should be sensible, tactful, considerate, and humble without being servile or scraping. As God's people we stand on our feet; we don't crawl before anyone."

Action needs to be taken as soon as possible if we are to recover from media addiction. The ninth step is often the step where people seem to stall. We must not let our amends sit and wait for a better day UNLESS it has been revealed to us that we must wait. By not following through with our amends as soon as we possibly can, our chances of losing our sobriety become greater.

Remember we agreed in the beginning that we are willing to go to any lengths to recover. Whatever we put before our recovery we may lose, therefore recovery needs to be one of the most important things in our life. Our procrastination and laziness need to be replaced with action and more action.

Dr. Bob, the Akron, Ohio, AA co-founder, found that he could not stay sober until he made his amends. He was so sincere and desperate to recover from alcohol, he accomplished all of his amends in one day.

"One morning he took the bull by the horns and set out to tell those he feared what his trouble had been. He found himself surprisingly well received, and learned that many knew of his drinking. Stepping into his car, he made the rounds of people he had hurt. He trembled as he went about, for this might mean ruin, particularly to a person in his line of business (he was a well-known doctor in his town)...At midnight he came home exhausted, but very happy. He has not had a drink since."

The authors conclude the Ninth Step with a list of blessings we can expect to receive by taking the ninth step. They tell us precisely what is going to happen once we commence to clear away the wreckage of our past. These are the promises we can expect after we complete our amends.

"If we are painstaking about this phase of our development, we will be amazed before we are half way through. We are going to know a new freedom and a new happiness. We will not regret the past nor wish to shut the door on it. We will comprehend the word "serenity" and we will know peace. No matter how far down the scale we have gone, we will see how our experience can benefit others. That feeling of uselessness and self-pity will disappear. We will lose interest in selfish things and gain interest in our fellows. Self-seeking will slip away. Our whole attitude and outlook upon life will change. Fear of people and of economic insecurity will leave us. We will intuitively know how to handle situations which used to baffle us. We will suddenly realize that God is doing for us what we could not do for ourselves."

The authors then ask us if these are extravagant promises. They tell us that in their experience they are not.

"They are being fulfilled among us—sometimes quickly, sometimes slowly. They will always materialize if we work for them."

A new way of living filled with serenity and peace are what we are promised if we are painstaking about making our amends and following through with living them. Our self-centered fear will be diminished and we can walk freely in the world with our heads held high. Our connection with our Higher Power will increase and we will know how to move forward in our lives in powerful and loving ways. If cleaning our side of the street can keep us healthy around our media and connected to our Higher Power in a state of spiritual bliss, is it not worth letting go of resentments and fully forgiving ourselves and others of any wrongs they have committed towards us? Would we rather be right or would we rather be happy?

As you sincerely work these steps, turn your life over to your Higher Power, take personal inventory, share your shortcomings with someone else, be willing to have these shortcomings removed, ask for God's guidance and be diligent in making amends to anyone you have hurt because of your media addiction and shortcomings, you will certainly find that God is doing for you what you could not do for yourself. This process and promise has been repeated by many of our members over and over, it is time tested. We invite you to test it out yourself.

As we become ready to embark on the Ninth Step, please be aware that making amends is sometimes a sensitive endeavor. We must prepare ourselves with our Higher Power beforehand or, as many of us learned the hard way, our attempts at making amends could backfire and cause more harm than good. So let's review what we have learned about making amends.

1. We make direct amends when possible, meaning we seek out the person we have harmed and face them directly.
2. We don't make direct amends if to do so would injure them or someone else. We don't have the right to do this, even if we want to free our conscience. This would be selfish.

3. We take all these considerations to God and, if needed, to another person who is wise and understands how to make good clean amends.
4. We don't avoid creditors. We pay our debts. We stop compulsive gambling and spending.
5. If we can't speak to the person we have wronged, we write them a letter. If someone has passed away, we can still write them a letter. If we can't locate someone we have wronged, we can write a letter to them and send it to ourselves. We want to use our words, which have power, to let our Higher Power know we are sorry, and to reach out with our hearts to the other person—even if they are not in our lives—letting them know we admit our wrongs and would make them right if we could.
6. We are willing to let go of relationships (online, fantasy, or otherwise) that interfere with our committed relationships. We sincerely make amends and live them on a daily basis with the help of our Higher Power.
7. We invite our loved ones to allow us to change and let go of the past with us. We ask them to pray with us and to help make our relationships more spiritual and to be able to find forgiveness and peace as a couple, family, and friends.

Let us give you some very practical guidelines for making amends. We will also provide you with a script you can use to help you as you in make healthy and clean amends. Start by doing the amends you think will be the easiest first.

There are three kinds of amends:

1. Direct amends: A "direct amends" is talking to a person you have harmed either face to face or on the phone.
2. Living amends: A "living amends" is changing your behavior around the person you have harmed and doing everything you can, through your actions to show them that you are sorry. Sometimes a living amends needs to be made before you feel certain you can live up to making a direct amends.
3. Indirect amends: An "indirect amends" is making amends indirectly. Sometimes you need to pray for the person awhile to make sure you have forgiven them. It might be dangerous to contact someone. You can pray for them. If someone is no longer living or you have lost contact with them and can't reach them directly, you can write them an amends letter and either send it in the mail or give it to God.

MAKING DIRECT AMENDS:

When making a direct amends its wise to keep it simple. Here is an easy script to use:

- A. Here's what I have done wrong
- B. I apologize for this
- C. Is there anything I can do to make this right?
- D. Is there anything else I have done to harm you that you want to discuss?

To better absorb this simple amends script, I will repeat the above four lines again.

Here is an example of a simple clean amends:

Mary, I yelled at you the other day and you did not deserve that.
I am sincerely sorry.
Is there anything I can do to make this right with you?
Is there anything else I don't know about that you want to discuss with me?

It's important to realize that clean amends are clear and concise. There is a different between a clean amends and a dirty amends. A dirty amends has an excuse added to it and focuses on you. A clean amends focuses on what you did and on the other person.

For example, here is a dirty amends:

Mary, you know the other day when I raised my voice, I was having a really hard day. My boss yelled at me and someone rear-ended me, and I think I am coming down with a cold...anyway I am sorry, I was just having a bad day.

As you can see, the whole apology was about the person making the amends rather than the person the amends was meant for.

There is another type of amends some of us call a double-dog-dirty-amends. This is when you make amends to someone hoping they will see they have wronged YOU and actually need to make an amends to you. This is not an amends, its manipulation, trying to get the other person to admit they are wrong. It's the ego's way of still holding on and feeling entitled to its resentment. If we are to make clear, clean amends we must not be manipulative or self-centered.

Sometimes you might think you need to make an amends when you really don't. This is where your Higher Power and the help of a wise advisor or sponsor comes in handy. Don't attempt to figure out your amends all alone. Get help and feedback from others.

Another important detail to remember is: don't make an amends until you feel you have fully forgiven and worked through your side of the situation. Otherwise you may end up making a double dog dirty amends.

Make your amends as simple and sincere as you can and leave the rest to your Higher Power. If you have expectations about how the other person is supposed to react, you may become despondent if the person doesn't respond the way you want them to or doesn't accept your amends.

Sometimes people are not ready to forgive and won't welcome your amends. Don't take this personally. Allow people time. Remember, we make amends for our personal recovery, people are free to accept them or not. This is why we keep our amends clean, simple, and let go of the outcome.

It is often suggested to make a living amends until your Higher Power tells you the time is right to make a direct amends. Use your higher power every step of the way.

Please start making amends to those whom you have harmed. By making amends, you will convert the barriers that have separated you from others to bridges of reconciliation. By listening to the God of your understanding, you will be given the "strength, inspiration and direction" to change lives, starting with your own. Miracles will occur.

All addictions have one thing in common: the inability to connect to other people. We attach instead to our addictions. For instance, we love spending time with fantasy characters on TV, but find it difficult to fully enjoy real people. This is why making amends is so important to overcome media addiction. When we sincerely make an amends, we are connecting in an authentic and considerate way to another person. Our hearts will open to them and our experience is that their hearts will open to us too. Our fear of people and the compulsive need to hide alone with our media leaves us, because we are feeling nourished by these connections. We are seeing others in a different light and we also start to see ourselves in a different light.

This concludes our discussion of Step Nine, the third Spiritual Activity of **Restitution**. Part of your assignment for the next session is to start making amends to those on your amends list. If you are not sure how to proceed with a specific amends, ask for help from your sponsor, sharing partner or spiritual advisor and of course, your Higher Power. Do not delay.

END OF PART 3

PART 4

Some of you may not realize it yet, but you are in the process of experiencing the personality change sufficient to recover from media addiction.

We commend you for choosing to let the God of your understanding direct your lives. Now, it is time to expand upon this new God consciousness. We do this by living the rest of the Steps on a daily basis.

The Tenth Step asks us practice Steps Four through Nine every day. The Eleventh Step shows us how to improve our spiritual connection through prayer and meditation. The Twelfth Step provides us with guidelines for carrying our life-saving message to others. We will complete today's session by learning how to take the Tenth Step.

Step 10 -- Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.

In this step we begin to move into the Spiritual Activity of **Guidance**. In Steps One through Three, we made the decisions that put us on the spiritual path. In Steps Four through Nine, we took the actions necessary to remove those things that had separated us from the God of our understanding. Now, we're ready to grow into the promised spiritual awakening.

The key to the Tenth Step is the word "continue". The "Big Book" authors emphasize the importance of continuing to take the steps.

"This thought brings us to Step Ten, which suggests we continue to take personal inventory and continue to set right any new mistakes as we go along. We vigorously commenced this way of living as we cleaned up the past. **We have entered the world of the Spirit**. Our next function is to grow in understanding and effectiveness. This is not an overnight matter. It should continue for our lifetime."

In this paragraph the authors explain how to live, one day at a time. We call this our twenty-four-hour plan. We continue to take inventory, continue to make amends and continue to help others every day. Let's look at the third sentence in this paragraph again. It is very important. It reads, "We have entered the world of the Spirit."

This sentence contains an amazing revelation. Basically, the "Big Book" authors have just informed us that our lives have already been transformed as a result of taking Steps One through Nine. They state that we have already had a "revolutionary change in [our] way of living and thinking."

How could that be? Well, it's very simple. There is no way a newcomer can take these Steps without "divine help." You have not only developed a belief in a God of your understanding, but you have come to rely upon this Power to guide you through the inventory and restitution process. You are now living in the solution.

The authors summarize the process we use to remain spiritually connected:

"...Continue to watch for selfishness, dishonesty, resentment, and fear. When these crop up, we ask God at once to remove them. We discuss them with someone immediately and make amends quickly if we have harmed anyone. Then we resolutely turn our thoughts to someone we can help. Love and tolerance of others is our code."

In this paragraph, the "Big Book" authors present the test for self-will a second time. In Session 2, we described how to use this test to check the liabilities side of our Fourth Step inventory to determine if we need to make amends. In the Tenth Step, the authors advise us to apply the same test, with minor variations, to our daily inventory. Here they instruct us "to watch for selfishness, dishonesty, resentment, and fear."

The authors even provide us with specific directions on how to rid ourselves of these self-centered behaviors. First, we must realize they are not consistent with our Creator's plan for our lives. Next, we take the steps necessary to move from self-will to God's will. We discuss our shortcomings with our sponsor or sharing partner, ask the "One who has all power" to remove them, and if necessary, "set right the wrong(s)." We then try to help someone else.

How do we "keep in fit spiritual condition?" By taking a daily inventory. What is our reward? "A daily reprieve."

The "Big Book" authors describe this "daily reprieve":

"It is easy to let up on the spiritual program of action and rest on our laurels. We are headed for trouble if we do, for [media] is a subtle foe. We are not cured of [media addiction]. What we really have is a daily reprieve contingent on the maintenance of our spiritual condition. Every day is a day when we must carry the vision of God's will into all of our activities. How can I best serve Thee—Thy will (not mine) be done."

Another reward is God-consciousness—direct contact with the "Spirit of the Universe."

"Much has already been said about receiving strength, inspiration, and direction from Him who has all knowledge and power. If we have carefully followed directions, we have begun to sense the flow of [the] Spirit into us. To some extent we have become God-conscious. We have begun to develop this vital sixth sense. But we must go further and that means more action."

Once again, they insist that our lives have already changed. We are now "(conscious) of the Presence of God." As we continue with the recovery process, the "Power greater than ourselves" will guide our thoughts and actions and strengthen our intuition—our "vital sixth sense."

Now that we have made it to Step Ten, we want to share another story of an early AA members who writes about his daily Tenth Step and how, through taking the Steps of AA, he came to the conclusion that acceptance was the answer to all his problems. (I will change alcohol terms to media):

"If there ever was anyone who came to [MAA] by mistake, it was I. I just didn't belong here. Never in my wildest moments had it occurred to me that I might like to be a [media addict]. ... Of course, I had problems, all sorts of problems. "If you had my problems, you'd [binge on media] too was my feeling."

"... To this day, I am amazed at how many of my problems—most of which had nothing to do with [media addiction], ... have become manageable or have simply disappeared since I quit [getting drunk with media]."

"... It helped me a great deal to become convinced that [media addiction] was a disease, not a moral issue; that I had been [binging] as a result of a compulsion, even though I had not been aware of the compulsion at the time; and that sobriety was not a matter of willpower. The people of [MAA] had something that looked much better than what I had, but I was afraid to let go of what I had in order to try something new; there was a certain sense of security in the familiar.

"... After I had been around [MAA] for seven months... I was finally able to say, "Okay, God. It is true that I—of all people, strange as it may seem, and even though I didn't give my permission—really, really am a [media addict] of sorts. And it's all right with me." When I stopped living in the problem and began living in the answer, the problem went away. **From that moment on, I have not had a single compulsion to [get drunk on media].**"

"And acceptance is the answer to all my problems today. When I am disturbed, it is because I find some person, place, thing, or situation—some fact of my life—unacceptable to me, and I can find no serenity until I accept that person, place, thing, or situation as being exactly the way it is supposed to be at this moment. Nothing, absolutely nothing, happens in God's world by mistake. Until I could accept my [media addiction], I could not stay sober; unless I accept life completely on life's terms, I cannot be happy. I need to concentrate not so much on what needs to be changed in the world as on what needs to be changed in me and in my attitudes."

"... Acceptance taught me that there is a bit of good in the worst of us and a bit of bad in the best of us; that we are all children of God and we each have a right to be here. When I complain about me or about you, I am complaining about God's handiwork. I am saying that I know better than God."

"For years I was sure the worst thing that could happen to [me is that I]... would turn out to be a [media addict]. Today I find it's the best thing that has ever happened to me. This proves I don't know what's good for me. And if I don't know what's good for me, then I don't know what's good or bad for you or for anyone. ... Before [MAA] I judged myself by my intentions, while the world was judging me by my actions."

"... My serenity is inversely proportional to my expectations. The higher my expectations... the lower is my serenity... I... [ask] myself, How important is it, really? How important is it compared to my serenity, my emotional sobriety? And when I place more value on my serenity and sobriety than on anything else, I can maintain them at a higher level..."

"... I do whatever is in front of me to be done, and I leave the results up to [God]; however it turns out, that's God's will for me.... For my serenity is directly proportional to my level of acceptance. When I remember this, I can see I've never had it so good."

It is now time to take the Tenth Step. The "Big Book" authors write:

"... We continue to take personal inventory and continue to set right any new mistakes as we go along."

Here is an easy prayer provided by early AA members to help us take the Tenth Step, you can find the seeds of this prayer on page 84 of the Big Book:

"God, please help me watch for Selfishness, Dishonesty, Resentment and Fear. When these crop up in me, help me to immediately ask you to remove them from me and help me discuss these feelings with someone. God, help me to quickly make amends if I have harmed anyone and help me to resolutely turn my thoughts to someone I can Help. Help me to be Loving and Tolerant of everyone today. Amen"

Although we have asked our Higher Power to remove our selfishness, dishonesty, resentments, and fear, it is up to us to stay vigilant if at any point throughout the day they crop up again. When this happens, we immediately ask for them to be removed again. We also don't do this alone. We talk to someone else. Call our action partners or sponsor. If we have hurt someone by our behavior, or have been inconsiderate of another, we make amends as quickly as we can. We don't want to take these problems into the next day. We want to clean up our mess as we go along. Next, we find someone who we can help. Perhaps we call another member of MAA. Giving service always brings us back into balance, we again begin to focus on what really matters. When we observe our situation we can ask:

"What would consideration look like in this situation? What would faith look like in this situation? What would generosity look like in this situation?"

Let's read the Tenth Step prayer together:

"God, please help me watch for Selfishness, Dishonesty, Resentment and Fear. When these crop up in me, help me to immediately ask you to remove them from me and help me discuss these feelings with someone. Father, help me to quickly make amends if I have harmed anyone and help me to resolutely turn my thoughts to someone I can Help. Help me to be Loving and Tolerant of everyone today. Amen"

Will those who completed the first Eight Steps and are working on their Ninth Step amends please be ready to respond to the following Tenth Step question: "Will you continue to take personal inventory and continue to set right any new mistakes as you go along?"

If so, please state your name, followed by "Yes."

Thank you.

According to the "Big Book" authors, those who answered "yes" to this question have taken Step Ten.

In this third session we have accomplished a lot. We have taken steps Five through Ten. This is a remarkable accomplishment, please take a moment to acknowledge to yourself how far you have come.

In the next session, we will continue the **Guidance** process by presenting and taking Step Eleven and continue the **Sharing** process by presenting Step Twelve.

Again, thank you for letting me be of service.

To close this session, please join me in the Serenity Prayer:

God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change. The courage to change the things I can, and at the wisdom to know the difference.

I look forward to continuing this journey of recovery with you in session four. Until then, May God bless and keep you.

End of Part 4