

Step Three Ceremony

After completing the 7 questions for setting bottom lines and the thirty questions that guide us through the first three Steps, we meet with our sponsor to celebrate the completion of the first Three Steps with an optional ceremony.

The texts that we need to perform the Step Three Ceremony are *Alcoholics Anonymous*, A.A.'s Big Book, the A.A. *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*, and *Came To Believe* have been included in the ceremony below.

After completing the ceremony we also celebrate the completion of the first three Steps by stepping up sponsees at a meeting of our choice (see section after the Ceremony).

Step One

SPONSOR

“The disciplines of setting and maintaining bottom-line behavior, phone calls, reporting to sponsors and attending meetings all help us grow. In recovery, action is the magic word. I wish to thank you for asking me to be your sponsor. I have and will continue to need you as much as you need me. Let us join hands and pray.”

SPONSOR AND SPONSEE

“Higher Power, if it be your will, help us to commit ourselves to these Steps in accordance with you will.”

SPONSOR

“There are five candles in front of you. Each candle represents a Step in recovery. The first two represent TRUTH AND REALITY. Without these two qualities, we would not be recovering sex and love addicts.”

Sponsor lights the first candle.

“The candle of truth is the guiding light of all who strive to recover from sex and love addiction. It is a force that brings peace. The sex and love addict must make truth their watchword. They must fearlessly face the truth to avoid the pitfall of self-deception.”

Sponsor lights the second candle.

“This is the candle of reality and it is a new light. It opens the door to a new life. It holds promise of new understanding. It offers a chance for personal renewal. It goes beyond fantasy and holds the dream of a better tomorrow. Without the light of reality we are destined to remain in the sick, shadowy world of past mistakes and unrealistic dreams of false tomorrows.”

Sponsor asks their sponsee the following questions so that they may retake the first Step.

“You have spent a great deal of time getting in touch with your feelings. Can you recall how you felt on the first day of your recovery?”

“Do you want recovery and the S.L.A.A. program to become a way of life? If so, why?”

Sponsor reads page 45, paragraphs 4 and 5 in Came To Believe, starting, “Then as this power began to unfold...”

Then, as this power began to unfold new selves within me, a greater understanding of my fellowmen began. With a new awakening each day—new strengths, new truths, new acceptance of A.A. people and people not in A.A.—a new world opened up. And every day it still does.

The adversities, loneliness, sickness, losses, and disappointments mean nothing now. I'm happy, because I came to believe—not only in God, but in the goodness in everyone.

“What do the words personal powerlessness mean to you?”

“Step One asks that you learn to let go. Do you feel you have learned to let go?”

“What does letting go mean to you?”

“It is said that we have an obsession. Explain what that means to you.”

“Do you recognise the symptoms when your life is unmanageable? What do you do when you feel things are getting unmanageable?”

“What does the word compulsion mean to you? Have you ever felt that you were compelled to do things?”

“Did you feel that obsession and compulsion were part of your life? How? How did you try to control these aspects of your life?”

“How long have you been seeking remedies for your obsession? What did you do when you felt your behavior was getting out of control? What happened to the ideas you tried? What did you do when you noticed you were different? Did you ever realize you had an addiction to sex and love? Did you ever try sheer willpower? Are there other methods you would like to investigate to manage your compulsive behavior? Do you think there is a solution to your problem today?”

“In recovery we seek to practice humility, and let go of ego and pride on a daily basis. Are you willing to do this?”

“Is working the S.L.A.A. program a life or death matter for you?”

“Read page 24 in the *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*, from the last paragraph ‘Under the lash...’”

Sponsee reads:

Under the lash of [addiction], we are driven to [recovery], and there we discover the fatal nature of our situation. Then, and only then, do we become as open-minded to conviction and as willing to listen as the dying can be. We stand ready to do anything which will lift the merciless obsession from us.

SPONSOR

“Are you totally powerless over sex and love addiction and anorexia? Have we fully conceded that we were not?”

“Read page 21 (Step One) in *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*.”

Sponsee reads:

WHO cares to admit complete defeat? Practically no one, of course. Every natural instinct cries out against the idea of personal powerlessness. It is truly awful to admit

that, [addiction] in hand, we have warped our minds into such an obsession for destructive [thinking] that only an act of Providence can remove it from us.

No other kind of bankruptcy is like this one. [Addiction], now become the rapacious creditor, bleeds us of all self-sufficiency and all will to resist its demands. Once this stark fact is accepted, our bankruptcy as going human concerns is complete.

But upon entering [recovery] we soon take quite another view of this absolute humiliation. We perceive that only through utter defeat are we able to take our first steps toward liberation and strength. Our admissions of personal powerlessness finally turn out to be firm bedrock upon which happy and purposeful lives may be built.

We know that little good can come to any [addict] who joins [recovery] unless they have first accepted their devastating weakness and all its consequences. Until they so humble them self, their sobriety – if any – will be precarious. Of real happiness they will find none at all. Proved beyond doubt by an immense experience, this is one of the facts of [recovery] life. The principle that we shall find no enduring strength until we first admit complete defeat is the main taproot from which our whole Society has sprung and flowered.

SPONSOR

“You've accepted powerlessness. What must you do now?”

Sponsee should realize that recognition of these concepts is not enough. Action and willingness are next. This is the transition to Step Two.

SPONSOR

“You have just taken the First Step. At this point I ask that you light the third candle which is the candle of SURRENDER. As you do so, I will read:

Sponsee lights the third candle.

“In recovery surrender is the first and most important act necessary to launch you into the other Steps. Without the surrender of your sex and love addiction, your ego, and your will, all else is hopeless. When you surrender you let go of negative thoughts, disbelief, and grandiosity and you open yourself up to the process of learning who you are and where you fit into the scheme of things.”

Step Two

Sponsor should ask their sponsee the following questions so that they may retake Step Two.

SPONSOR

Read aloud the introduction to Step Two, page 25 in A.A. *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*.

THE moment they read Step Two, most newcomers are confronted with a dilemma, sometimes a serious one. How often have we heard them cry out, “Look what you people have done to us! You have convinced us that we are alcoholics and that our lives are unmanageable. Having reduced us to a state of absolute helplessness, you now declare that none but a Higher Power can remove our obsession. Some of us won't believe in God, others can't, and still others who do believe that God exists have

no faith whatever He will perform this miracle. Yes, you've got us over the barrel, all right—but where do we go from here?"

"What does this Step mean to you?"

"Do you believe that a Power outside yourself will restore you to sanity and help you?"

"Read page 32-33 in *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*, 'To clergymen, doctors...'"

Sponsee reads:

To clergymen, doctors, friends, and families, the [addict] who means well and tries hard is a heartbreaking riddle. To most [addicts] they are not. There are too many of us who have been just like them and have found the riddle's answer. This answer has to do with the quality of faith rather than its quantity. This has been our blind spot. We supposed we had humility when really, we hadn't. We supposed we had been serious about religious practices when, upon honest appraisal, we found we had been only superficial. Or, going to the other extreme, we had wallowed in emotionalism and had mistaken it for true religious feeling. In both cases, we had been asking something for nothing. The fact was we really hadn't cleaned house so that the grace of God could enter us and expel the obsession. In no deep or meaningful sense had we ever taken stock of ourselves, made amends to those we had harmed, or freely given to any other human being without any demand for reward. We had not even prayed rightly. We had always said, "Grant me my wishes" instead of "Thy will be done." The love of God and [others] we understood not at all. Therefore, we remained self-deceived, and so incapable of receiving enough grace to restore us to sanity.

SPONSOR

"In the S.L.A.A. fellowship belief in anything outside of ourselves, larger than ourselves is enough to take us to the next Step. The idea is not to take back your old ideas, not to rely on self-will. S.L.A.A. does ask that you have an open mind. How open are you?"

"Have you always been willing to listen? If you are willing now, how did this change?"

Did indifference play an important part in your life? How?"

"What about disappointment? Did this reinforce your compulsiveness?"

"Step Two mentions fear. Can you discuss your fears?"

"Our fears and lack of power are self-centered and selfish in origin. But this selfishness and self-centeredness can be replaced by a partnership with a Higher Power. Faith in your Higher Power replaces fear and allows the power of your Higher Power to flow through you. You can then follow your Higher Power's will and exercise your will by asking, 'Thy will, not mine, be done.' A further explanation of this is on page 44-45 in *Alcoholics Anonymous*, A.A.'s Big Book, 'We Agnostics'. Will you read it please?"

Sponsee reads:

WE AGNOSTICS

If, when you honestly want to, you find you cannot quit entirely, or if when [acting out], you have little control over [your behaviour], you are probably [an addict]. If that be the case, you may be suffering from an illness which only a spiritual experience will conquer.

To one who feels they are an atheist or agnostic such an experience seems impossible, but to continue as they are means disaster, especially if they are an [addict] of the hopeless variety. To be doomed to an [addictive] death or to live on a spiritual basis are not always easy alternatives to face.

But it isn't so difficult. About half our original fellowship were of exactly that type. At first some of us tried to avoid the issue, hoping against hope we were not true [addicts]. But after a while we had to face the fact that we must find a spiritual basis of life – or else. Perhaps it is going to be that way with you. But cheer up, something like half of us thought we were atheists or agnostics. Our experience shows that you need not be disconcerted.

If a mere code of morals or a better philosophy of life were sufficient to overcome [addiction], many of us would have recovered long ago. But we found that such codes and philosophies did not save us, no matter how much we tried. We could wish to be moral, we could wish to be philosophically comforted, in fact, we could will these things with all our might, but the needed power wasn't there. Our human resources, as marshalled by the will, were not sufficient; they failed utterly.

Lack of power, that was our dilemma. We had to find a power by which we could live, and it had to be a Power greater than ourselves. Obviously. But where and how were we to find this Power?

SPONSOR

“Defiance often comes between ourselves and a Higher Power. Can you describe any defiance you have in relation to your Higher Power?”

“Most of the time our problems with a Higher Power come from debating the question of whether or not our Higher Power is there to help us. *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions* discusses this idea. Let me read from pp. 26-27 in, *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*, ‘At this juncture ...’”

Sponsor reads:

At this juncture, their sponsor usually laughs. This, the newcomer thinks, is just about the last straw. This is the beginning of the end. And so it is: the beginning of the end of their old life, and the beginning of their emergence into a new one. Their sponsor probably says, “Take it easy. The hoop you have to jump through is a lot wider than you think. At least I’ve found it so. So did a friend of mine who was a one-time vice-president of the American Atheist Society, but he got through with room to spare.”

“Well,” says the newcomer, “I know you’re telling me the truth. It’s no doubt a fact that [SLAA] is full of people who once believed as I do. But just how, in these circumstances, does a fellow ‘take it easy’? That’s what I want to know.”

“That,” agrees the sponsor, “is a very good question indeed. I think I can tell you exactly how to relax. You won’t have to work at it very hard, either. Listen, if you will, to these three statements. First, [SLAA] does not demand that you believe anything. All of its Twelve Steps are but suggestions. Second, to get sober and to stay sober, you don’t have to swallow all of Step Two right now. Looking back, I find that I took it piecemeal myself.

Third, all you really need is a truly open mind. Just resign from the debating society and quit bothering yourself with such deep questions as whether it was the hen or the egg that came first. Again, I say, all you need is the open mind.”

The sponsor continues, “Take, for example, my own case. I had a scientific schooling. Naturally I respected, venerated, even worshiped science. As a matter of fact, I still do – all except the worship part. Time after time, my instructors held up to me the basic principle of all scientific progress: search and research, again and again, always with the open mind. When I first looked at [SLAA] my reaction was just like yours. This [SLAA] business, I thought, is totally unscientific. This I can’t swallow. I simply won’t consider such nonsense.

“Then I woke up. I had to admit that [SLAA] showed results, prodigious results. I saw that my attitude regarding these had been anything but scientific. It wasn’t [SLAA] that had the closed mind, it was me. The minute I stopped arguing, I could begin to see and feel. Right there, Step Two gently and very gradually began to infiltrate my life. I can’t say upon what occasion or upon what day I came to believe in a Power greater than myself, but I certainly have that belief now. To acquire it, I had only to stop fighting and practice the rest of [SLAA’s] program as enthusiastically as I could.

“This is only one person’s opinion based on his own experience, of course. I must quickly assure you that [SLAA’s] tread innumerable paths in their quest for faith. If you don’t care for the one I’ve suggested, you’ll be sure to discover one that suits if only you look and listen. Many a [person] like you has begun to solve the problem by the method of substitution. You can, if you wish, make [SLAA] itself your ‘higher power.’ Here’s a very large group of people who have solved their [addiction] problem. In this respect they are certainly a power greater than you, who have not even come close to a solution. Surely you can have faith in them. Even this minimum of faith will be enough. You will find many members who have crossed the threshold just this way. All of them will tell you that, once across, their faith broadened and deepened. Relieved of the [addictive] obsession, their lives unaccountably transformed, they came to believe in a Higher Power, and most of them began to talk of God.”

SPONSOR

“Now would you turn to page 12 in *Alcoholics Anonymous*, A.A.'s Big Book? ‘Despite the living...’ Read it and then we’ll discuss it.”

Sponsee reads:

Despite the living example of my friend there remained in me the vestiges of my old prejudice. The word God still aroused a certain antipathy. When the thought was expressed that there might be a God personal to me this feeling was intensified. I didn’t like the idea. I could go for such conceptions as Creative Intelligence, Universal Mind or Spirit of Nature but I resisted the thought of a Czar of the Heavens, however loving [God’s] sway might be. I have since talked with scores of [people] who felt the same way.

My friend suggested what then seemed a novel idea. He said, “Why don’t you choose your own conception of God?” That statement hit me hard. It melted the icy intellectual mountain in whose shadow I had lived and shivered many years. I stood in the sunlight at last.

It was only a matter of being willing to believe in a Power greater than myself. Nothing more was required of me to make my beginning. I saw that growth could start from that point. Upon a foundation of complete willingness I might build what I saw in my friend. Would I have it? Of course I would!

Thus was I convinced that God is concerned with us humans when we want [God] enough. At long last I saw, I felt, I believed. Scales of pride and prejudice fell from my eyes. A new world came into view.

SPONSOR

“Are you willing to go to any lengths to get rid of your old ideas?”

“Step Two is a rallying point. It puts us on the right path. It shows us the insanity of our addiction. It puts right our relationship with our Higher Power. It shows us where we can end up if we lose our connection with our Higher Power. Discuss your relationship to your Higher Power as it is today. How do you relate to the word insanity? Do you believe your Higher Power can restore you to sanity?”

“You have just taken the first two Steps.”

SPONSOR

Sponsee lights the fourth candle.

“Let us now light the candle of ACCEPTANCE. As you light it, I shall read to you:

“Without acceptance you could not have progressed this far. Acceptance is seeing things as they really are. Acceptance is an understanding that we have spent our lives denouncing everything and now we must open up our hearts as well as our minds and accept. We must accept the will of our Higher Power and accept that only our Higher Power can restore us to sanity.”

Step Three

SPONSOR

“Before we go further I would like to read something from pp. 567-568 in *Alcoholics Anonymous*, A.A.'s Big Book, ‘Spiritual Experience’”

Sponsor reads:

The terms “spiritual experience” and “spiritual awakening” are used many times in this book which, upon careful reading, shows that the personality change sufficient to bring about recovery from [addiction] has manifested itself among us in many different forms.

Yet it is true that our first printing gave many readers the impression that these personality changes, or religious experiences, must be in the nature of sudden and spectacular upheavals. Happily for everyone, this conclusion is erroneous.

In the first few chapters a number of sudden revolutionary changes are described. Though it was not our intention to create such an impression, many [addicts] have nevertheless concluded that in order to recover they must acquire an immediate and overwhelming “God-consciousness” followed at once by a vast change in feeling and outlook.

Among our rapidly growing membership of thousands of [addicts] such transformations, though frequent, are by no means the rule. Most of our experiences are what the psychologist William James calls the “educational variety” because they develop slowly over a period of time. Quite often friends of the newcomer are aware of the difference long before they are them self. They finally realise that they have undergone a profound alteration in their reaction to life; that such a change could hardly have been brought about by them self alone. What often takes place in a few months could seldom have been accomplished by years of self-discipline. With few exceptions our members find that they have tapped an unsuspected inner resource which they presently identify with their own conception of a Power greater than themselves.

Most of us think this awareness of a Power greater than ourselves is the essence of spiritual experience. Our more religious members call it “God-consciousness.”

Most emphatically we wish to say that any [addict] capable of honestly facing their problems in the light of our experience can recover, provided they do not close their mind to all spiritual concepts. They can only be defeated by an attitude of intolerance or belligerent denial.

*We find that no one need have difficulty with the spirituality of the program. **Willingness, honesty, and open mindedness are the essentials of recovery. But these are indispensable.***

“Making a decision to turn your will and your life over to your Higher Power is part of the process of Step Three. Your Higher Power is with you now. A spiritual awakening can be compared to planting a seed. Growth does not begin when you can see the flower breaking its way through the earth. It begins at the moment the seed is planted. Your spiritual awakening began at the moment of your surrender in Step One.”

“Read pp. 62-63 in *Alcoholics Anonymous A.A.'s Big Book*, ‘Selfishness, self-centredness...’”
Sponsee reads:

Selfishness – self-centeredness! That, we think, is the root of our troubles. Driven by a hundred forms of fear, self-delusion, self-seeking, and self-pity, we step on the toes of our fellows and they retaliate. Sometimes they hurt us, seemingly without provocation, but we invariably find that at some time in the past we have made decisions based on self which later placed us in a position to be hurt.

So our troubles, we think, are basically of our own making. They arise out of ourselves, and the [addict] is an extreme example of self-will run riot, though we usually don’t think so. Above everything, we [addicts] must be rid of this selfishness. We must, or it kills us! God makes that possible. And there often seems no way of entirely getting rid of self without [God’s] aid. Many of us had moral and philosophical convictions galore, but we could not live up to them even though we would have liked to. Neither could we reduce our self-centeredness much by wishing or trying on our own power. We had to have God’s help.

SPONSOR

“I'd like to ask you a few questions: *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions* says in relation to Step Three that ‘practicing Step Three is like the opening of a door which to all appearances is

still closed and locked.’ Was this your experience? How was your vision of life like a locked door?”

“How shall you keep your Higher Power in your life?”

Sponsor tells the sponsee what they have done to keep their Higher Power ever present.

“Do you feel that you are aware of the dangers of self-sufficiency?”

“Step Three calls for us to make a decision. We must decide to turn our will and our lives over to the care of our Higher Power. Are you willing to make that decision?”

“We realize that faith does not automatically mean that we have let our Higher Power into our life. But our willingness is already demonstrated in the way we work at casting out our old ideas and turning ourselves over to the S.L.A.A. program to relieve our sex and love obsession.”

“Let us spend some time now praying that our Higher Power will come into our lives and actively guide us. Will you read the prayer on page 63 in *Alcoholics Anonymous*, A.A.'s Big Book, ‘God, I offer myself...’ whilst I bow my head?”

Sponsee reads:

God, I offer myself to You – to build with me and to do with me as You will. Relieve me of the bondage of self, that I may better do Your will. Take away my difficulties, that victory over them may bear witness to those I would help of Your power, Your love, and Your way of life. May I do Your will always!

SPONSOR

“Now I will read it to you while you pray to your Higher Power letting them know of your decision to turn your will and life over to them.”

Sponsor reads.

“You have just made a commitment to your Higher Power.”

“You have asked your Higher Power to relieve you of the bondage of self.”

“We have turned it over, we have made a decision. Sex and love addiction will no longer be the focus of your life. Now we must get out and help others.”

“S.L.A.A. has taught us to live for today and to work at loving our Higher Power, ourselves and others. Our Higher Power loves us enough to remove our obsession. If our Higher Power can love us, can't we love ourselves? If we learn to love ourselves then it will be easier to love and forgive others.”

SPONSOR

“You have just taken the Third Step.”

“Will you please light the fifth candle as I read?”

Sponsee lights the fifth candle.

“This is the candle of KNOWLEDGE and it opens the door wide. We now know that our Higher Power is on our side. We can see and hear our Higher Power’s pronouncements in our lives.

We recognise what we may do and what only our Higher Power can do. We acknowledge the greatest gift our Higher Power has given us is knowing ourselves.”

End of Ceremony.

Stepping Up the Sponsee at a Meeting

After the Step Three Ceremony we also celebrate by being stepped up by our sponsor at an S.L.A.A. HOW meeting. This is an opportunity for the group to join us in celebrating another example of the miracles that abound in S.L.A.A. Our sponsor is asked to introduce the newcomer who has 30 days of continuous back-to-back sobriety, has taken the first Three Steps and is ready to become a sponsor. At this meeting, we share for two minutes each. Stepping up a sponsee at a meeting can also be done when they have completed Steps Five, Twelve and the Maintenance Steps.